Reading for Fictional Worlds in Literature and Film

Danielle Simard

Doctor of Philosophy

University of York

English and Related Literature

March, 2020

Abstract

The aim of this thesis is to establish a critical methodology which reads for fictional worlds in literature and film. Close readings of literary and cinematic texts are presented in support of the proposition that the fictional world is, and arguably should be, central to the critical process. These readings demonstrate how fictional world-centric readings challenge the conclusions generated by approaches which prioritise the author, the reader and the viewer. I establish a definition of independent fictional worlds, and show how characters rather than narrative are the means by which readers access the fictional world in order to analyse it. This interdisciplinary project engages predominantly with theoretical and critical work on literature and film to consider four distinct groups of contemporary novels and films. These texts demand readings that pose potential problems for my approach, and therefore test the scope and viability of my thesis. I evaluate character and narrative through *Fight Club* (novel, Chuck Palahniuk [1996] film, David Fincher [1999]); genre, context, and intertextuality in *Solaris* (novel, Stanisław Lem [1961] film, Andrei Tarkovsky [1974] film, Steven Soderbergh [2002]); mythic thinking and character's authority with *American Gods* (novel, Neil Gaiman [2001]) and *Anansi Boys* (novel, Neil Gaiman [2005]); and temporality and nationality in *Cronos* (film, Guillermo Del Toro [1993]), *El espinazo del diablo* (film, Guillermo Del Toro [2001]), and *El laberinto del fauno* (film, Guillermo Del Toro [2006]).

List of Contents

List of Figures

Acknowledgements

I would not have been able to accomplish this thesis without a huge network of support academically and personally. A big note of thanks to my supervisor, Erica Sheen, whose insight, patience, and dedication was instrumental in producing a thesis I am proud to submit. Thanks also to Bryan Radley, my Thesis Advisory Panel member, whose commitment to my success was instrumental throughout the entire process, and also to Claire Chambers, who has been a support throughout my time at York.

My family, although they are stuck on the other side of an ocean, are my cheerleaders and my strength. Great thanks to all of them. To my mom for her fierce love, and to my dad for his steady support. To my brother, who I know is proud of me and who knows I love him very much, and to my other brother, for his cheerful confidence in me. To my sister – she knows what for. A very special thanks to my nephews Micah and Eli, who love books and movies as much as I do. Their smiling faces and bottomless love has kept me going through every day. I also owe so much to my York family. Thanks to John, the other man, who is more like family than I think he knows. To Kim and B, who have cheered me on through so much and are some of the best women I know. Thanks to Celia for treats, wine, and constant love. And to Yu-Hua, who is a healer, thank you for beer in the sun.

Finally, an immense thank you to my partner for his love, patience, support, and faith. For always being there, for everything, thank you.

Declaration

I declare that this thesis is a presentation of original work and I am the sole author. This work has not previously been presented for an award at this, or any other, University. All sources are acknowledged as references.

Introduction

In this thesis, I seek to establish the ways in which fictional worlds are represented in literature and film, how these worlds are linked to our own, and the consequences of making the fictional world both the point of departure and the destination in critical readings. My aim is thus to establish a critical methodology in which the fictional world is central to our experience of the texts discussed in the chapters that follow. Conventionally, the actual world – 'our' world – is deemed to provide the presiding frames of reference for acts of criticism. In such approaches, the context and intention of the author or creator, the context and desires of the reader or viewer, and the intertextual relations created by both are dominant. These ways of reading are highly productive, and I do not dismiss their relevance to the critical act. In the study that follows, however, I redirect their attention from the worlds of author, reader and viewer to the fictional world represented by the text.

This thesis is in two parts. The first provides an account of theoretical approaches to fictional worlds, using interdisciplinary concepts from literary theory, film theory, and philosophy to establish the independence and individuality of fictional worlds, and to form a critical understanding of characters as the reader or viewer's primary point of access to the fictional world. I evaluate theoretical approaches to medium, genre, adaptation, myth, and time which are central to the critical analyses which follows. Although this first section looks closely at a variety of theoretical approaches, my aim is not to make claims or cover analytical ground in particular fields, but to apply and modify established perspectives in order to define and test the critical scope of the proposed methodology.

The second part of this thesis presents critical analyses in four chapters, looking at four groupings of contemporary texts which serve as crucibles for my fictional world-centric approach. Each group of texts are chosen to highlight different aspects of fictional world engagement, and to give a broad range of texts with respect to medium, geography, language, and subject. Chapter One of Part Two looks at two iterations of *Fight Club*: Chuck Palahniuk's 1997 novel, and David Fincher's 1999 film.[1] Both *Fight Club*s feature unreliable narration which obscures the reality of the fictional world. Despite the opaque subjectivity of the narration, the fictional world becomes clear by centering the experience of the characters in the critical reading. Chapter One therefore concludes

[1] Chuck Palahniuk, *Fight Club* (London: Vintage, 1997).
Fight Club, directed by David Fincher (Fox 2000 Pictures, 1999), film.

that the narration does not dictate the reality of the fictional world, but rather that the fictional world is the reality against which the narrative is measured.

Chapter Two considers three different texts titled *Solaris,* and each seems to demand a contextual reading which prioritises the actual world rather than the fictional one. In each case, I take a contextual approach and apply it to the fictional world. Stanisław Lem's Polish novel is a staple of the science fiction genre.[2] While theoretical approaches to genre prioritise the connections between texts and the reader's perceptual connection between them, by looking at Kelvin's experience of reality, it becomes clear that classificatory views of genre fade. At the same time, conceptual ideas around generic reading can be productive when they are applied to characters. Criticism around Andrei Tarkovsky's Russian film tends to center on Tarkovsky's role as an 'auteur' director, and the film's contextual relevance as a Cold War text.[3] These areas of consideration are almost exclusive to the actual world reception of the text; and yet, these approaches can lead a critical reader to aspects of the fictional world which demonstrate their own contextual frames of reference, distinct from those of the actual world. Finally, Steven Soderbergh's *Solaris* exists academically as an American remake of European fictions, intrinsically linked through our experience as viewers to Tarkovsky's and Lem's works.[4] By acknowledging the actual world resonances which guide our viewing experience, considering adaptations as related works can illustrate the individuation of fictional worlds and emphasise the experiential subjectivity each character has in relation to their own reality.

The third chapter takes as its starting point the status of fictional world realities and characters established in Chapter One and the consideration of contextual readings explored in Chapter Two to analyse two novels by British-American author Neil Gaiman. Both *American Gods* and *Anansi Boys* are novels which engage intimately with the mythic, relying on our experience of mythology and fantasy to justify the scope of the supernatural within the narrative.[5] Such a depth of information and connotation imported by the reader into the story seems to preclude a fictional world-centric approach. However, a fictional world-centric reading proffers an alternate conclusion in each case. In *American Gods*, the apparently mythic loses some of its deific authority as it becomes clear that the gods are as real as the human characters. By centering the experience of the character Shadow, the ancient gods which populate the novel are shown instead to be alternate

[2] Stanisław Lem, *Solaris,* translated by Joanna Kilmartin and Steve Cox (London: Faber and Faber, 2016).
[3] *Solaris*, directed by Andrei Tarkovsky (Mosfilm, 1972), film.
[4] *Solaris*, directed by Steven Soderbergh (Twentieth Century Fox, 2002), film.
[5] Neil Gaiman, *American Gods* (New York: HarperTorch, 2001).
Neil Gaiman, *Anansi Boys* (New York: HarperTorch, 2005).

expressions of the real, accessible to any character with (the right) eyes to see. In *Anansi Boys*, the tropes and forms of myth remain powerful within the fictional world, a power which characters like Spider and Fat Charlie can control using a powerful voice. This powerful voice can bend reality simply by speaking words aloud, a convention which I call mythopoeic voice. In each case – the reality of apparent gods in *American Gods* and mythopoeic voice in *Anansi Boys* – the nature of the mythic within fictional worlds is exposed by acknowledging and analysing the expectations we as readers bring to a fictional text.

The fourth and final chapter of this project looks at three films by Guillermo del Toro in light of the three previous chapters. Each of these films manifest complex and changeable expressions of time, seemingly at the mercy of the filmic medium. In each case, a child seems to be at the centre of the temporal distortions. In the film *Cronos,* I consider how the time of the narration can differ from the time of the fictional world, reinforcing the individuation of the fictional world through the character of Aurora.[6] This film also looks at the transnationality of cinema, considering if and how the fictional world might respond to a transnational context. *El Espinazo del diablo*, hereafter called *The Devil's Backbone,* presents a tripartite experience of time which centers on the behaviour of characters who come into contact with the ghost child Santi.[7] Both *The Devil's Backbone* and *El laberinto del fauno* (hereafter called *Pan's Labyrinth*) – Mexican-Spanish productions set during the Spanish Civil War – seem to necessitate historically-oriented readings.[8] These postmemory texts (texts which re-imagine and re-remember a traumatic past) therefore seem to be rooted in our world. By applying a fictional world-centric methodology which centralises the experiences of the characters, these films can occupy an alternate contextual sphere which derives from the reality experienced by characters. In particular, the young Ofelia in *Pan's Labyrinth* creates her own referential context through mythopoeic voice. As a result, a confluence of opposing temporalities buffet her through the fictional world in opposition to what a reader might expect from a film structured like a fairy tale. In the final section of this chapter, I look closely at the way in which Ofelia's mythopoeic voice alters her experience of the fictional world, and how her subjective experience relates to its objective reality.

[6] *Cronos,* directed by Guillermo del Toro (CNCAIMC, 1993), film.
[7] *The Devil's Backbone*, directed by Guillermo del Toro (El Deseo, 2001), film.
[8] *Pan's Labyrinth*, directed by Guillermo del Toro (Estudios Picasso, 2006), film.

Part One: The Sum of its Parts

Although the idea of fictional worlds initially seems a straightforward concept – in its connection to creative terms like 'worldbuilding' – the term 'fictional world' is as amorphous as it is descriptive. Theorists have used the term and its genetic relatives, such as 'story world', 'film world', or 'world of the text', to signify a wide variety of concepts and an equally varied usage. I will be working with a definition of fictional worlds loosely derived from the philosophical concept of possible world theory and the literary theory of Thomas G. Pavel, Marie-Laure Ryan, and Lubomír Doležel.[9]

Doležel states that "specific features of fictional worlds of literature cannot be derived from the possible-world model of formal semantics, yet they can be identified only against the background of this model frame."[10] In short, the philosophical concerns around possible worlds cannot define the literary model of fictional worlds, but the possible worlds model is nonetheless the best way to propose fictional worlds in terms of literary and film theory. The differences between possible world philosophers are many, but they all work within a theoretical framework in which all possibilities exist, and each possibility exists in its own world, called a possible world. Fictional worlds can be thought of as some such possible worlds. According to David Lewis, all possible worlds are equally real: they are considered to be the 'actual world' (the 'real' world) by its inhabitants.[11] Primarily concerned with the possibility of truth statements for possible worlds, Lewis's model, like all models which give individual ontological status to possible worlds, requires modal statements.[12] Modal prefixes preface a statement, qualifying it in relation to the world to which it refers, and the realm of possibility, impossibility, or necessity to which it belongs. This allows for true statements to be made about the contents of a world that is not our own. For example, in our world, it is a lie to say that there is a venomous breed of bird called a 'scorpion hawk,' but in the world of the novel *The Lies of Locke Lamora*, it can be said that there exists a venomous bird called a scorpion hawk.[13] Indeed, the bird figures prominently in the dénouement of the novel's plot. Modal statements are essential for the philosophy of possible worlds, but in literary and film theory which does not hinge upon true statements, or the discussion of factual or

---

[9] Thomas G. Pavel, *Fictional Worlds* (London: Harvard University Press, 1986).
Marie-Laure Ryan, "Fiction, Non-Factuals, and the Principle of Minimal Departure," *Poetics* 9 (1980): 403-422.
Lubomír Doležel, *Heterocosmica: Fiction and Possible World* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998).

[10] Lubomír Doležel, "Mimesis and Possible Worlds," *Poetics Today* 9 (1988): 486.
Quoted in Marie-Laure Ryan, "Possible Worlds in Recent Literary Theory," *Style* 26, no. 4 (1992): 430.

[11] David Lewis, *Counterfactuals* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1973).
Referenced in Ryan, "Possible Worlds in Recent Literary Theory," 529.

[12] David Lewis, "Truth in Fiction," *American Philosophical Quarterly* 15, no. 1 (1978): 41.

[13] Scott Lynch, *The Lies of Locke Lamora,* from The Gentleman Bastards Sequence (New York: Bantam Spectra, 2006).

counter-factual statements, modals are usually not necessary and can be cumbersome. For this reason, I will not be relying on modals in my discussion, since my interest is in the potential of literary and film theory within fictional worlds rather than philosophical questions.

A contrasting possible worlds theory posed by Nicolas Rescher posits that possible worlds have a different ontological status than our world, because our world is independent, whereas possible worlds derive from mental activity such as storytelling or dreaming.[14] Rescher's position claims that possible worlds are dependent on conditions in our world, whereas Lewis believes that each possible world is as real as every other. My aim is not, however, to intervene in debates about the ontological status of possible worlds, but to use "the background of this model frame,"[15] as Doležel puts it, to establish the boundaries within which my thesis can be applied. I will be referring to fictional worlds as individuated and independent from our world, meaning that they are distinct from our experiential reality, and that events within our world do not alter existing fictional worlds. I will use the term *real* with respect to fictional worlds and their contents not to stake an ontological position, but to promote a discourse in which fictional worlds can be studied independently of the actual world without repetitive qualifications. The term 'actual world' is often used in the Lewisian sense, to refer to the world that is seen as 'real' by its inhabitants (whether that is our world, or another possible world).[16] However, since my project is critical rather than philosophical, in the sense that it focuses the critical possibilities of reading within fictional worlds rather than the philosophical question of their ontological status, I will be referring to our world as the 'actual world,' and sustaining the term 'fictional world' to refer to the world that is described by a text and where the inhabitants behave as if their world is real.[17] I do this primarily to limit any confusion of terms, and to maintain as clearly as possible the critical distinction between what domains of knowledge belong to our world and to the world of the fiction. In the fictional world of *Fight Club,*

---

[14] Nicholas Rescher, "The Ontology of the Possible," in *Logic and Ontology*, ed. Milton Munitz (New York: New York University Press, 1973), 166-81.
Referenced in Ryan, "Possible Worlds in Recent Literary Theory," 530.

[15] Doležel, "Mimesis and Possible Worlds," 486.

[16] For example, Marie-Laure Ryan uses the term 'actual' in this sense. With reference to direct quotations, I will qualify which 'actual world' I am referring to as necessary going forward.

[17] The term 'storyworld' is often used interchangeably with 'fictional world' in possible world literary theory. However, I will not be using the term 'storyworld,' since certain aspects of my project (as in Chapters One and Four) distinguish the properties of the fictional world from the contents of the story and narrative, and I do not wish to muddy this distinction through ambiguous terminology. I also do not wish to conflate 'fiction' with 'story,' and so will avoid 'storyworld.' 'Film world' is common in film theory to describe the world of a given film. This term creates a dependent referential linkage between the fictional world and the medium of the narrative which is accessed by the audience. I will therefore limit my use of terms other than 'fictional world' in the course of this thesis.

discussed in Chapter One, I can therefore say that Marla Singer is real and chain smokes real cigarettes. I can also say that Marla Singer is not real in the actual world.

Approaches to possible worlds in literary and film theory describe fictional worlds as worlds that derive from the text which describes them.[18] This type of framework for fictional worlds mandates a medium-specific understanding of fictional worlds, such that the quality and content of the fictional world depends on the medium of the text and the form of the narrative/narration. Literature and film present narrative through very different mediums, but the reality of a fictional world depends on its fictionality, not on its narrative medium. The text, as a material object, differs between the mediums: paper and ink, print, or digitized text for literature, and images (and often sound) displayed on a screen for film. The forms of narration are similarly medium-specific (this is further explored in Chapter One). These manifestations of text and narrative belong in our world. They are the ways in which we read, view or hear aspects of the fictional world in the context of the actual world. However, my understanding of fictional worlds as individuated and independent implies that it is the content of the fictional world – for example, the details and conditions as they are experienced by the characters, which will be discussed shortly – and not the way in which we access the description of it in narrative and text that is relevant. As a result, the reality conditions of fictional worlds are distinct from the content and form of narrative and textual medium. By the phrase 'reality conditions,' I mean the totality of information which constitutes the reality of the fictional world; this includes physical and natural laws, events, states of affairs, and constituents.[19]

Thomas G. Pavel's *Fictional Worlds* works within a referential semantic tradition to bring together philosophical and literary views on fictionality and fictional worlds. Pavel's work deals with philosophical questions around fictional worlds, and their relevance to a literary theorist's potential use for a fictional world; with this in mind, he differentiates between "an external approach to

[18] Pavel, *Fictional Worlds*, 42.

[19] In most cases, physical and natural laws are parallel in the actual and fictional worlds. The existence of conditions like gravity, momentum, weather, and so forth are taken for granted by readers because of their ubiquity and self-evidence in our experience. Characters also seem to take this type of law for granted. Readers will only posit changes to natural and physical laws if required by the text, a premise which will be explored shortly in reference to Marie-Laure Ryan's theory of minimal departure. Although many of these fictional world reality conditions are similar to those of the actual world, they are not the same. Where a reader might use the similarity as a means to collapse the fictional world into their experience of the actual world, there remains a clear separation between the actual and fictional. For example, although Buzz Lightyear uses gravity, aerodynamics and momentum to "fall with style" in John Lasseter's *Toy Story* (1995), it is not necessary – or likely – that exactly the same natural features which generate these forces in our actual world are those at work in the film. This would mandate that exactly the same universe and all of its contents are those experienced by the toys. Considering animated toys are not rampant in our world, it is possible – and likely – that the physical environment within *Toy Story* generates similar effects to ours without being dependent on the actual world for these laws.

fiction, which aims at gauging it against the nonfictional world, and an internal approach whose purpose is to propose models representing the user's understanding of fiction."[20] He states that three essential aspects around the concept of the fictional world need to be differentiated: "*metaphysical* questions about fictional beings and truth; *demarcational* questions regarding the possibility of establishing sharp boundaries between fiction and nonfiction, both in theory and in practical criticism; and *institutional* questions related to the place and importance of fiction as a cultural institution."[21] The first two questions will help to inform my functional understanding of fictional worlds. The third question as to the institutional existence of texts is entirely concerned with the realm of the actual, and is tied to Pavel's statements about "models representing the user's understanding of fiction." Although there will be links to socio-cultural, political and intertextual concerns in Chapters Two and Four in particular, Pavel's third question is not exceptionally useful in establishing a fundamental structure of fictional worlds as I use them this my thesis. I have discussed the importance of demarcational questions above, with the conclusion that fictional worlds are individuated and independent. The metaphysical question regards the concept of truth and the role it plays within the fictional world. Pavel argues that

> Global truth is not simply derived from the local truth-value of the sentences present in the text. […] Moreover, a text can possess more than one level of meaning. […] It is therefore useless to set up procedures for assessing the truth or falsity of isolated fictional sentences.[22]

Unlike possible world philosophers (such as Lewis),[23] Pavel argues that the truthfulness of 'micro-truths' (single statements) can be potentially irrelevant when faced with 'macro-truths' (the text as a whole).[24] In this case, Pavel associates meaning or allegory with truth. He proposes that the text provides such an effect of cohesive reality that truthfulness can only be interpreted through reference to the totality of the text and to its larger social context. This is a crucial step for the theory of fictional worlds outside philosophy. Pavel's arguments around macro-truths reflects his contemporary critical environment, which includes the formal and poststructuralist traditions which are derived from semiotic roots. In this discussion, the concept of macro-truth - expanded to include constituents and laws which are not directly stated by the text – can enable a discussion of fictional reality which can accommodate for characters who have altered perceptions (such as the

[20] Pavel, *Fictional Worlds*, 43.
[21] Pavel, *Fictional Worlds*, 12.
[22] Pavel, *Fictional Worlds*, 17.
[23] Lewis, "Truth in Fiction," 37-46.
[24] Pavel, *Fictional Worlds*, 17.

Narrator in *Fight Club*) or for characters who are unable to access the totality of a fictional reality (such as Shadow in *American Gods).* Statements regarding these characters can therefore be true of their experience but not necessarily true of the fictional world. This can be done without undermining the cohesiveness of the fictional world as a composite of reality conditions by encouraging a comprehensive view of a fictional world as a functioning reality rather than a prescriptive view of fictional worlds as limited by the content of their text.

Doležel determines that truthfulness is linked to cognition: "Fictional texts as performatives are outside truth-valuation; their sentences are neither true nor false. This property of fictional texts, […] is a precondition of their world-constructing power."[25] Doležel takes a significant step away from Pavel's position, dismissing the requirement of (philosophical) truth statements altogether when referring to the fictional world. He bases this upon the premise that there is a reciprocal necessity between textual activity and world construction. Such a reciprocity would mean that because the author was neither lying nor telling the truth while constituting the world through textual activity, there is no truth-valuation to be had. This position privileges the performative act, which here refers to all forms of fictional text, ranging from oral storytelling through written text and including audiovisual mediums like film.[26] He does argue, however, that non-constative statements about a fictional world may be true or false.[27] My approach looks away from textual statements and inward towards the fictional world, so a renaturing of this perspective is required. I agree with Pavel that truth in fictional worlds does not belong to the statement. I also agree with Doležel that truth statements have no value when referring to the textuality of the fictional world. However, as will be explored shortly, I do not agree that truth or authentication should reside with the author or text. In contrast, truth in fictional worlds relates to the internal coherence of their own reality conditions. Unless proven otherwise (by an unreliable narrator, by counterfactual information, or by other means), given fictional facts form the basis of determining truthfulness in the fictional world.[28]

---

[25] Lubomír Doležel, "Possible Worlds of Fiction and History," *New Literary History* 29, no. 4 (1998): 790. Referencing Gottlob Frege, *Translations from the Philosophical Writings of Gottlob Frege*, ed. Peter Geach and Max Black (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1980), 56-78.
J.L. Austin, *Philosophical Papers,* 2nd ed., Ed J.O. Urmson ad G.J. Warnock (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970).

[26] By connoting that texts are performatives and not constructions of individual statements, Doležel also privileges the position of the author/creator. In itself, referring to texts describing fictional worlds as performances is counterproductive for my position. However, the shape of Doležel's logic is broadly helpful in structuring my own understanding of fictional worlds as having reality based on their fictionality.

[27] Doležel, "Possible Worlds of Fiction and History," 806.

[28] Note that the term 'truth,' 'true' and 'truthfulness' are used in this project as general terms referring to cohesive and evidential conditions within the fictional or textual spheres, and not in the philosophical sense as used by David Lewis.

Fictional beings (including characters) form part of the metaphysical question asked by Pavel. The importance of character is explored throughout this thesis, but Chapter One specifically addresses the question of how it is made manifest. I will outline here the theoretical concerns which form the preliminary framework for that discussion. Pavel examines the position of fictional beings in fictional worlds through a semantic analysis of naming. He comes to the conclusion that "within fiction names work like usual proper names, that is as rigid designators attached to individuated objects, independent of the objects' properties."[29] This indicates that a character's name, like a name in the actual world, does not include reference to their properties, physical or otherwise. Pavel also calls for an abandonment of 'blocks', events or situations which create a referential history for non-real or fictional beings: "fictional beings do not necessarily come into existence through individual gates or blocks in their referential history; rather, their fate is linked with the movements of populous groups that share the same ontological destiny."[30] He argues for an "internal model" of fictional worlds in which fictional beings' individuation and existence is relative to others, and therefore subject to degrees.

Ruth Ronen elaborates on fictional facts: "fictional facts do not relate *what could have or could not have occurred in actuality, but rather, what did occur and what could have occurred in fiction*." Fictional facts are things which did, does, or will occur in the fictional world in accordance with the fiction's other reality conditions.[31] She examines models for fictional characters, pointing out that perspectives like Pavel's "[do] not necessitate 'absolute' existence. Fictional entities are only ascribed a selective set of properties as a symptom of their being existent without existing."[32] She argues that characters (fictional entities) do not exist in (our) reality, even though they are existent within their own fictional world. As a result, they do not face the same requirements, privileges and properties as us. Fictional beings in Pavel's model exist on a scale between actual and fictional, "reflecting the type of commitment one makes in introducing an entity."[33] Ronen's statement speaks to the idea of indeterminacy, or incompleteness; in fiction, "fictional entities can have the property 'p and~p' because there is no referent in relation to which either p or~p can be determined."[34] She insists that there is a problem making truth statements about fictional

[29] Pavel, *Fictional Worlds*, 37.
[30] Pavel, *Fictional Worlds*, 42.
[31] Ruth Ronen, *Possible Worlds in Literary Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 9. Original emphasis.
[32] Ronen, *Possible Worlds in Literary Theory*, 118.
[33] Ronen, *Possible Worlds in Literary Theory*, 118.
[34] Ronen, *Possible Worlds in Literary Theory*, 109.
In philosophy, the letter 'p' can stand as a marker for any proposition. '~p' is a negation of the proposition.

characters based on indeterminate facts: characters have nothing to refer to in order to either prove or disprove the veracity of a given proposition. Their difference from us by virtue of their fictional nature as existent without existing means that we cannot evaluate the truth about a fictional entity. Because of this, a given proposition can be both true ('p') and not true ('~p'). Like Pavel, Doležel believes that incompleteness can exist in degrees, is dependent on the author, and can be an aesthetic choice: "the fiction writer is free to vary the number, the extent, and the functions of the gaps [incompleteness]; his choices between gaps and fictional facts are determined by aesthetic factors […]."[35] This view of characters as fluidly incomplete based on the author's decisions answers the problem of indeterminacy in terms of literary theory.

Both Pavel and Doležel's perspectives privilege the author and the text, as is necessary when examining the fictional world in a textual or formal analysis. However, it is insufficient when the fictional world becomes the point of critical reading. Fortunately, from this perspective, the problem of incompleteness becomes less influential. The argument around incompleteness features significantly on our status as 'existing', which enables us to evaluate the truth and reality of things in our world by virtue of their being consistent or inconsistent with our own existence. When considering fictional entities from within the fictional world, however, the primacy of the existence of our world (considered through the author and reader) is displaced. Characters might be existent without existing from our point of view, but this condition is shared by all other constituents and aspects of the fictional world. It can therefore be said that they can indeed have a referential matrix, just not one that exists in the same way that we exist. Their reality, their incompleteness, and their truth value extrapolated from our text-based knowledge becomes inconsequential. Put bluntly, fictional characters are as real as they seem to be to themselves and to other characters. Although this is a fine point to distinguish, it becomes increasingly important when a characters' perception of their own world differs from that experienced by everything else within that world. Films like Peter Weir's *The Truman Show* (1998) capitalise on this distinction. Truman unknowingly lived his entire life in a film set for the entertainment of other members of the fictional world. He is real within the fictional world – he exists in the same way as other characters exist, and this is fundamentally unaltered. However, his perception of his own reality, himself included, is fundamentally at odds from that of all other constituents of the fictional world.

This is a common concern in the philosophy of fiction, and forms the basis of David Lewis' work on possible worlds, and in particular his article "Truth in Fiction."

[35] Doležel, "Possible Worlds of Fiction and History," 794.

It is therefore possible, within the above argument, to say that Truman exists as a complete entity and experiences true events, despite the fact that his own referential matrix is false.

The next concern Pavel has for fictional worlds is that of demarcation: "questions regarding the possibility of establishing sharp boundaries between fiction and nonfiction, both in theory and in practical criticism."[36] Although Pavel discusses several factors, the most important for this study is that of distance. Pavel states that "fictional distance appears to boil down to difference and, in order to be manageable, difference must be kept to a minimum."[37] By this statement, Pavel signifies that the actual and fictional worlds are linked, and their 'distance' from each other is founded exclusively on that which is different in the fictional versus the actual. Marie-Laure Ryan clarifies a similar point through the principle of minimal departure, arguing that as readers "we reconstrue the world of a fiction […] as being the closest possible to the reality we know. This means that we will project upon the world of the statement everything we know about the real world, and that we will make only those adjustments which we cannot avoid."[38] By this she means that there is propositional overlap between a model world (most often the actual world) and the alternate possible world (the fictional world), and any deviation from this overlap is equivalent to what is specifically identified as different in the text.[39] While I agree with this principle with respect to how we as readers and viewers interpret the fictional world, I would emphasise that fictional worlds are independent worlds, meaning that they do not interact with our world. Some texts do explore the distinction between the actual and fictional world, but this is quickly collapsed. An example of this might be Mel Brooks' *Blazing Saddles* (1974), in which the final chase sequence involves the characters 'breaking out' of their film onto the Warner Brothers studio campus, and carrying out their land dispute through other sets. These situations clearly reference the gap between the fictional and the actual by rupturing the third and fourth walls. However, this apparent distinction does not bridge the gap between worlds. The sequence may have been shot on the actual Warner Brothers studio lot, but once the lots and sets are 'in' the fictional world, they are distinguished by use and reference as fictional through participation in fictional events. The gap between the actual and the fictional is therefore maintained, and the implied bridge collapses back into the referential matrix of the fictional world. Despite this clear and persistent distinction from us, fictional worlds are not autonomous worlds.[40] Were the fictional world autonomous, it would not have any

[36] Pavel, *Fictional Worlds*, 12.
[37] Pavel, *Fictional Worlds*, 89.
[38] Ryan, "Fiction, Non-Factuals, and the Principle of Minimal Departure," 406.
[39] Ryan, "Fiction, Non-Factuals, and the Principle of Minimal Departure," 414-419.
[40] Ruth Ronen refers to fictional worlds as autonomous worlds, because the fictional world "is constructed as a world having its own distinct ontological position, as a world presenting a self-sufficient system of

connection to the actual world. This is impossible: the text sketching the events of the world is necessarily created, exists, and received in the actual world. The independent fictional world can be perceived from our world in narratives in texts, but the reader's perceptions, desires, or perspective cannot change the fictional facts within the text or the laws and states of affairs within the fictional world.[41] Further, as Ronen states, fictional worlds "are not more or less fictional according to degrees of affinity between fiction and reality: facts of the actual world are not constant reference points for the facts of fiction," and furthermore, "facts of the actual world have no a priori ontological privilege over facts of the fictional world."[42] Instead, the reader must acknowledge that the text exists in the actual world, but must behave as if the fictional world is nevertheless autonomous.[43]

To synthesise the above discussion, the view I will be putting forward here can be extrapolated from the principle of minimal departure. Ryan defines this principle thus: "whenever we interpret a message concerning an alternate world, we reconstrue this world as being the closest possible to the reality we know."[44] Given that fictional worlds are different from the real world, the principle of minimal departure claims that our world and fictional worlds are as similar as possible. We perceive our world to be real, and characters in fictions behave as if they perceive their worlds to be real. We know or assume through lived experience and learned knowledge that the world is consistent and predictable beyond our experience and outside of our presence. This knowledge is based on our understanding of the states, laws, and events which dictate our reality (the *factual domain*).[45] Characters in fictions also behave as if they know, or can assume, that there can be a predictable reality beyond their immediate experience based on their own factual domain. They also behave as if they can anticipate future events which have not yet happened (the *actualisable domain*), implying a cohesiveness between their understanding of reality and the causal links which are outside of their direct control.[46] Fictional worlds manifest as complex realities with both factual and actualisable domains, of which the narratives we read or watch provide only partial information. An example of this would be Dan Trachtenberg's *10 Cloverfield Lane* (2016).

---

structures and relations. Possible worlds, however, despite being distinguishable worlds, do not share this ontological autonomy."
Ronen, *Possible Worlds in Literary Theory*, 8.

[41] This could potentially be argued against in cases such as versioning and adaptation. However, in these cases the fictional world is not altered; another distinct fictional world is manifest. This is further explored later in this section and with reference to Soderbergh's *Solaris* in the third section of Chapter Two.

[42] Ronen, *Possible Worlds in Literary Theory*, 12.

[43] Marie-Laure Ryan, "The Modal Structure of Narrative Universes," *Poetics Today* 6, no. 4 (1985): 717-755.

[44] Ryan, "Fiction, Non-Factuals, and the Principle of Minimal Departure," 403.

[45] Ryan, "Possible Worlds in Recent Literary Theory," 720.

[46] Ryan, "Possible Worlds in Recent Literary Theory," 720.

The characters are abducted and trapped in a bunker by a stranger and are told that there is an apocalypse outside the bunker, so they cannot leave. The abductees have no evidence as to whether the apocalypse is real or not, or what the nature of it might be should it be real. Despite having no proof, the characters spend the duration of their time in the bunker theorizing what the situation might be outside the door, demonstrating that they have made the basic assumption that there is a world they cannot know outside the bunker door. They assume that there are forces at play of which they have no experience and in which they are not active participants. At the end of the film, having overcome their murderous captor, the survivors escape the bunker, only to be killed by rampaging aliens. Evidently, the characters are not only aware of reality beyond their experience, but also that there are conditions of the fictional world reality beyond the scope of their knowledge. Considering that the fictional world manifests as a reality with both factual and actualisable domains, that characters behave as if they consider their world to be the actual world, and keeping the principle of minimal departure in mind, it follows that the critical position needs to be flipped toward the fictional world in order to generate conclusions beyond the limitations of the material text.

Narrative and narration are actual world constructs which provide information about the fictional world for readers and viewers. According to Edward Branigan, "narrative is a perceptual activity that organizes data into a special pattern which represents and explains experience," a constantly evolving framework that orders events and actions into a comprehensive and causal story.[47] Although there are many different explanations as to what narrative may be, Branigan's is clear, concise, and useful. It illustrates the constructed and individualised nature of narrative, and allows for the distinction between narrative and the fictional world in both literature and film. Narration is the way that this information is conveyed to the audience but does not prescribe events in the fictional world; it is an inefficient way to access the fictional world. Whether the approach to narrative focuses on questions of form and content (formalism and structuralism), signification (post-structuralism), or organisation and patterning (cognition theory), acts of narration are structurally linked to author, reader and viewer by virtue of its textual nature. Certain approaches – affect and sense theory, for instance – encourage active resonance with the experience of the fictional world, but even these originate and return to the actual world. Narrative and narration thus creates a causal and aesthetic system which allows the reader or audience to perceive the fictional world, but they cannot directly affect its reality conditions. This would appear to create a problem of access: since readers and viewers can only directly participate with narration and

[47] Edward Branigan, *Narrative Comprehension and Film* (London: Routledge, 1992), 3.

narrative, and narration and narrative are not part of the fictional world, it stands to reason that they cannot interact with the fictional world. The answer to this dilemma, proposed in this thesis, is that characters perform this bridging function, creating an experiential reflection through which reader and viewer can engage with the fictional world: a process of projection which initiates the possibility of access to the fictional world as another reality.

Theories of character tend to focus on its composition or construction. For Uri Margolin, James Phelan, Peter J. Rabinowitz, Robyn Warhol, and Brian Richardson, characters are an accumulation of traits, and are secondary to the narrative itself.[48] This perspective is neatly stated by Margolin (1986), who believes that characters are a cumulative product of characterization and character-building across the narrative:

> Character […] is a signified, for which some other textual elements serve as signifiers. Within the (re)constructed narrative universe, characters and character traits are *not* primary. They presuppose other representational elements, such as actions, events and settings which are more fundamental as regards the ontology of the narrative universe.[49]

In this model, characters are a functional requirement of narrative, and therefore cannot have the depth and mental properties of an actual person.[50] Furthermore, a character cannot be fully composed until the narrative has finished and all of their textual attributes are discovered.[51] In a later study (1990), Margolin refers to characters as *non-actual individuals,* which are "of some domain(s) of [the] possible world, and in it/them, it can be uniquely identified, located in a space/time region, and endowed with a variety of physical and mental attributes and relations."[52] They are therefore distinct from others in their world (individuals can be "uniquely identified"), their world is non-actual ("member of some domain(s) of [the] possible world"), and non-actual individuals are constructed by a series of traits and actions ("a variety of physical and mental attributes and relations"). He posits three primary constitutive conditions that are necessary for the

---

[48] Uri Margolin, "The Doer and the Deed: Action as a Basis for Characterization in Narrative," *Poetics Today* 7, no. 2 (1986): 205-225.
Uri Margolin, "Individuals in Narrative Worlds: and Ontological Perspective," *Poetics Today* 11, no. 4 (1990): 843-871.
James Phelan, et. al, *Narrative Theory: Core Concepts and Critical Debates* (Ohio: Ohio State University Press, 2012).
[49] Margolin, "The Doer and the Deed," 206. Original emphasis.
[50] Margolin, "The Doer and the Deed," 205.
[51] Margolin, "The Doer and the Deed," 206.
[52] Margolin, "Individuals in Narrative Worlds," 844.

fictional character. These are existence (which is composed of the referential systems of the text),[53] individuality (which includes both individually constant and universal traits),[54] and distinctness and singularity from other individuals who coexist.[55] For Margolin, characters are functional signifiers which are incidental to fictional narratives, do not have mental faculties, and can be fully described with categorical traits that are the cumulative effects of textually prescribed attributes.

Other theorists are similarly preoccupied with categorisation and functional analysis. In *Narrative Theory: Concepts and Critical Debates,* James Phelan and Peter J. Rabinowitz state that characters are compilations of particular attributes, which "do resemble possible people, they are artificial constructs that perform various functions in the progression, and they can function to convey the political, philosophical, or ethical issues being taken up by the narrative."[56] In this model, these bundles of attributes exist to fulfil narrative and symbolic functions, based on different relations between the three components of character: mimetic ("resemble possible people"), synthetic ("artificial constructs"), and thematic ("to convey […] issues being taken up by the narrative").[57] As with Margolin, characters are a subset of the narrative itself, and constituted only by the traits implied by the text. Brian Richardson agrees with Phelan and Rabinowitz, adding that there should also be an intertextual component to character;[58] Robyn Warhol takes an extreme stance in this direction, stating that "characters are marks on the page, made up of the alphabetical characters […]. They have no psychology, no interiority, no subjectivity. Characters are the representational effects the novelist creates in structuring the novel."[59] For Warhol, the personhood of the individual is removed from the concept of character: characters are determined and confined to textual content, and individuals are defined by their distinction from other characters and from the world around them.[60] Each of these above models view characters as subsets of the narrative, subject to categories and subcategories which enable the theorist to reconfigure and structure character under the terms of the actual world and with respect the receiver.

These models are useful in textual analysis. In this type of critical reading, characters do not need to be more than that which is ascribed to them by the text, because the narrative is what is

[53] Margolin, "Individuals in Narrative Worlds," 851.
[54] Margolin, "Individuals in Narrative Worlds," 852.
[55] Margolin, "Individuals in Narrative Worlds," 854-5.
[56] Phelan, *Narrative Theory*, 111.
[57] Phelan, *Narrative Theory*, 112-5.
[58] Phelan, *Narrative Theory*, 132.
[59] Phelan, *Narrative Theory*, 119
[60] Phelan, *Narrative Theory*, 120.

being interrogated. They become less useful when the contents of the fictional world are examined separately from the narrative. Within the context of the fictional world, characters do seem to have their own mental processes, interiority, and subjectivity. Some elements of the above approaches will be useful in the chapters that follow, such as Margolin's primary constitutive conditions: existence, individuality, and distinctness/singularity.[61] These conditions can be outlined by the state of the fictional world as it exists beyond the narrative. Characters as individuals are internally coherent beyond their narrative functionality, and can generate or manipulate actions, events, and settings as much as they are generated by them, in the same – or even more spectacular – ways that we generate or manipulate our actual world.[62]

There is therefore a contradiction between the importance and essentiality of character within narrative, and the individual agency of the character within the fictional world. To address this contradiction, Murray Smith discusses the concept of *twofoldness*,[63] as first proposed by Richard Wollheim.[64] Twofoldness, or 'seeing-in,' is concerned with visual depictions of characters. It acknowledges the seeing of the surface on which the image is represented (such as the canvas of a painting), and the recognition of the object that is being shown (such as the character being painted). In Richard Wollheim's words, "when we look at a picture, we see what the picture represents *in* the surface marked by the artist, and such seeing-in contrasts strongly with our ordinary experience of 'seeing face-to-face.'"[65] Smith emphasises that the two aspects do not negate each other; instead, "we apprehend both aspects of character simultaneously; neither aspect is eliminable from our experience."[66] The ineliminable nature of the surface may seem contradictory to the direction of my argument, but I largely agree with Smith and Wollheim. The reader's and viewer's engagement and understanding of character is fluid, and is in constant flux between the two aspects.[67] It is impossible to ignore the construct of the text being read or watched, because this is the way in which the character, and the fictional world, is being conveyed.

---

[61] Margolin, "The Doer and the Deed," 206. Original emphasis.

[62] Identifying characters as individuals can be problematic when considering characters with real-world counterparts, transient characters (characters which appear in more than one fictional world), and characters in adaptations. Some discussion of these issues appears in my discussion of adaptation later in this section, and are applied to my discussion of Steven Soderbergh's *Solaris* in Chapter Two. David Lewis,"Truth in Fiction," 37-46, Thomas G. Pavel, *Fictional Worlds,* and Uri K. Margolin "Individuals in Narrative Worlds," 843-871, provide further reading on these specific problems. Examples of these spectacular ways in which characters directly generate and manipulate their fictional reality are seen in the discussion of mythopoeic voice in Chapter Three, and of warped time in Chapter Four.

[63] Murray Smith, "On the Twofoldness of Character," *New Literary History* 42, no. 2 (2011): 277-294.

[64] Richard Wollheim, *Painting as Art* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1987). Original emphasis.

[65] Wollheim, quoted in Murray Smith, "On the Twofoldness of Character," 279.

[66] Smith, "On the Twofoldness of Character," 281, 287.

[67] Smith, "On the Twofoldness of Character," 280.

However, it is necessary to acknowledge the distinction between "the surface marked by the artist" and "what the picture represents *in"* such a surface. Approaches to character as part of a constructed narrative are bound to the marked surface. In order to see-in, a methodology in which characters are approached as real within the fictional world is essential. Models like Margolin's non-actual individuals, and the compilation model of Phelan, Rabinowitz, Warhol and Richardson explore the marked surface in detail; seeing-in can provide critical readings that go beyond it.

It is possible to have a character experience constituents and events differently than the way in which a reader might access the narrative, which is a prominent feature of genre when considered from within a fictional world. Textual elements such as genre are often overt, manifesting in every aspect of the text. Formal and structural approaches are based on 'after the fact' information, and arise after a critical analysis of the text.[68] As such, they are not fundamental to a deeper understanding of the text, or of the fictional world. They are, however, fundamental to a deeper understanding of the critic's particular point of view of literature. More communicative and meaning-oriented techniques situate the meaning derived from genre-influenced readings with the reader or critic themselves.[69] They decode the importance of generic affiliation based in the information derived away from the text proper, rather than towards it. The actual world orientation is equally prevalent in approaches which focus on language use,[70] socio-political impact,[71] and intertextual or historical resonances with other similar texts for genre theory and criticism.[72] Many of the hallmark components of individual genres hinge on the reader's ability to

---

[68] Rick Altman, *Film/Genre* (London: BFI Publishing, 1999).
Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971).
John Rieder, "On Defining SF, or Not: Genre Theory, SF, and History," *Science Fiction Studies* 37, no. 2 (2010): 191-209.
Tzvetan Todorov, *The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1980).
[69] E.D. Hirsch, Jr., *Validity in Interpretation* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1967).
Jaques Derrida, "The Law of Genre," trans. Avital Ronell, *Critical Inquiry* 7, no. 1 (1980): 55-81.
[70] Altman, *Film/Genre.*
Carl Freedman, *Critical Theory and Science Fiction* (London: Wesleyan University Press, 2000).
[71] Altman, *Film/Genre*.
Fredric Jameson, *Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (London: Routledge, 2002).
[72] Altman, *Film/Genre*.
Rick Altman, "A Semantic/Syntactic Approach to Film Genre," *Cinema Journal* 23, no. 3 (1984): 6-18.
Brian Attebery, *Strategies of Fantasy* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1992).
Alastair Fowler, *Kinds of Literature: An Introduction to the Theory of Genres and Modes* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982).
Freedman, *Critical Theory and Science Fiction*.
Rieder, "On Defining SF, or Not.
Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, translated by G.E.M. Anscombe (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1978).

recognise familiar generic traits and to note intertextual resonances that invest generic components with meaning. In science fiction theory, for example, Darko Suvin posits that the substance of science fiction is that which is most distant from the 'zero-world,' which is the world of the author.[73] This encompasses hallmark genre traits such as aliens and faster-than-light travel in science fiction, which are foreign from our reality. A similar framework is given by Kathryn Hume in her book *Fantasy and Mimesis*, which posits a 'consensus reality' which is "the reality we depend on for everyday action. We agree that food, oxygen and liquid are necessary for life; that bodies fall; that stones are solid and hard; that humans die."[74] Consensus reality is therefore our mutual reality, and literature's interest comes from "the artistic motives for literary departures even from such basic realities as these."[75] In particular, the speculative genres such as fantasy and science fiction which appear in discussion in this thesis are largely defined by their departure from some aspect of the actual world. These examples of basic generic definition evidence the way in which genre reading centralises the world of the author and reader. All textual aspects which are relevant for each critical perspective is accounted for, except for the fictional world. Within the fictional world, the concept of genre dissolves into the reality conditions. Generic tropes (the space stations in *Solaris*, for example) are not a generic tendency but a reality, and unworthy of note.

In this respect, the critical weight of genre dissolves into the fabric of reality in the fictional world. This is not to say that genre does not exist on the level of the fictional world. Characters in fictional worlds carry concepts of genre that influence their interactions with other characters and objects (such as Carmen's disdain for Ofelia's fairy tales in *Pan's Labyrinth* in Chapter Four). Just as their world is not the same as the actual world, their concepts of genre are not the same as ours. Their ideas are informed by different texts, different histories, and different biases. They may resemble those of our world, but cannot be the same because of the different conditions of their reality. In Chapter Two, I will focus on the genre of science fiction with respect to *Solaris*, explore the nature of the science fictional world, and demonstrate that a fictional world-based critical perspective provides an expanded scope for genre theory.

Chapter Two will also explore remakes, adaptation and versioning from the perspective of the fictional worlds of *Solaris*. My intention here is not to cover ground in the field of adaptation studies, but to use specific theories of adaptation to consider adaptation from within the fictional

---

[73] Darko Suvin, *Metamorphoses of Science Fiction: On the Poetics of a Litereary Genre* (London: Yale University Press, 1979): 11.
[74] Kathryn Hume, *Fantasy and Mimesis: Responses to Reality in Western Literature* (London: Methuen, 1984), xi.
[75] Hume, *Fantasy and Mimesis*, xi.

world.[76] This can be difficult, as an analysis of adaptation necessarily reflects upon the links between the new and the source text – a connection which is overtly tied to the actual world. A range of scholars have sought to emancipate the adaptation from its dependency on source material, and such a perspective can be tempting. Sarah Cardwell's is one such approach, which leans towards considering adaptations "as films (or programs) in their own right – that is, not in relation to a source book."[77] This approach is particularly helpful in that it moves away from others which are focused on fidelity, medium-specificity, and comparison.[78] At face value, this statement seems best able to allow for a fictional world-centric reading, since isolating an adaptation removes any problems of actual world resonance. This does, however, completely eliminate the necessity of questioning adaptations as adaptations, obfuscating or eliminating the important question of intertextual awareness rather than providing an alternative. Brian McFarlane aptly points out that once a viewer becomes aware of the source-adaptation relationship, it becomes increasingly difficult to remove this equation from the consideration of the adapted text:

> The film has the right to be judged as a film; then, one of the many things it also is an adaptation […] That is, the precursor literary work is only an aspect of the film's intertextuality, of more or less importance according to the viewer's acquaintance with the antecedent work.[79]

The knowledge of source texts – or in the case of Soderbergh's *Solaris*, source texts and previous adaptations and versions – becomes embedded in the rest of the contextual information which is at play when viewing an adapted film. Linda Hutcheon provides an exploration of adaptation which provides a useful starting place for the consideration of adaptation from the perspective of individuated fictional worlds. She believes that the inherent relationship between source and adaptation is a productive one: "an adaptation is a derivation that is not derivative – a work that is

---

[76] Sarah Cardwell provides an astute evaluation of the usefulness and continuity of the field for further reading in this area.
Sarah Cardwell, *Adaptation Revisited: Television and the Classic Novel* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002).

[77] Sarah Cardwell, "Adaptation Studies Revisited," 51

[78] Dudley Andrew, "Adaptation," in *Concepts in Film Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), 28-37.
George Bluestone, *Novels into Film* (London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003).
Kamilla Elliott, *Rethinking the Novel/Film Debate* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).
Gérard Genette, *Palimpsests: Literature in the Second Degree*, trans. Channa Newman and Claude Doubinsky (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1997).
Thomas M. Leitch, *Film Adaptation and its Discontents: From* Gone With the Wind *to* The Passion of the Christ (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007).

[79] Brian McFarlane, "It Wasn't Like that in the Book…," in *The Literature/Film Reader: Issues of Adaptation*, ed. James M. Welsh and Peter Lev (Plymouth: Scarecrow Press, Inc., 2007), 9.

second without being secondary. It is its own palimpsestuous thing."[80] The analogy of a palimpsest implies that the source material is embedded in the fabric of the adaptation, but that the process of creating an adaptation shapes it into something entirely new and distinct from the source. Hutcheon's position, while hinging like others on the information of the actual world, provides the best point of departure for a study of fictional worlds in adaptations *as* adaptations while preserving the integrity of all texts involved.

Following on the above discussion on the properties of fictional worlds, and using Hutcheon's ideas of adaptation as palimpsest, discussing fictional worlds in adapted texts becomes clearer. As above, fictional worlds are individuated and independent worlds, regardless of the links the reader or viewer might form between it and the actual world. Hutcheon states that "adaptation is repetition, but repetition without replication. And there are manifestly many different possible intentions behind the act of adaptation: the urge to consume and erase the memory of the adapted text or to call it into question is as likely as the desire to pay tribute by copying."[81] She acknowledges that it is difficult to know the intention of the process of adaptation, but whatever its intent, the produced work is individuated: a repetition without replication. This leaves the linkages between the fictional worlds of adapted texts. Distinguishing independent fictional worlds in such texts depends on departures and deviations in reality conditions, including states of affairs, events, characters, and objects. With such criteria, it is possible to distinguish between adaptations and variations which depict distinct fictional worlds (through a difference in reality conditions) and those which do not. While comparing adaptations and evaluating their fidelity is not particularly helpful from the perspective of fictional worlds, it is an approach which can help to identify the areas of distinction between fictional worlds. Among the more obvious distinctions are those which are medium-specific. These distinctions are not useful with my approach, as discussed above, since the form of narration belongs to the actual and not the fictional world. Instead, it is the distinction in reality conditions which is helpful, since the reality conditions of the fictional world are essential in its constitution and cohesion. In *Fight Club*, for example, the novel has Tyler planning to destroy the Parker-Morris building and the neighbouring museum.[82] In the film, however, it is the headquarters of several notable credit card companies which are destroyed. Similar sequences of events take place in both worlds, and all of the natural laws seem to be consistently parallel. And yet, there is a fundamental distinction: in one world, two buildings are targeted, whereas in the

[80] Linda Hutcheon and Siobhan O'Flynn, *A Theory of Adaptation* (London: Routledge, 2008), 9.
[81] Hutcheon, *A Theory of Adaptation,* 7.
[82] Chuck Palahniuk, *Fight Club* (London: Vintage, 1997).

other the entire skyline is leveled. The planning, execution, and resulting realities are fundamentally distinct. Although the film is clearly an adaptation of the novel, it becomes obvious in this destructive difference that the reality in which the characters participate in the film is not altered by the plans made in the novel. Although *Fight Club* clearly demonstrates the palimpsestuous actual world relationship between an adaptation and its source text, so too does it also define their individuation and distinction from each other.

It is also tempting here to lean on indeterminate truths as an easy way through the problem of similar fictional worlds. Indeterminate truths in fiction relate to statements which cannot be verified as true or false because of the incompleteness of fiction. For distinctions in the adaptations of *Fight Club*, for example, it is possible to point to fundamental differences in the ending. In Palahniuk's novel, The Narrator finds himself in a mental hospital, whereas Fincher's film ends with Marla and the Narrator witnessing the destruction of the city.[83] It cannot be said that in the film the Narrator does not find himself in a mental hospital after these events. It cannot be said because there is no evidence against the Narrator's time in a mental hospital in the film, just as there is no evidence for it. It simply is beyond the scope of fictional facts made accessible by the narrative. Because of indeterminate truths – and the inadequacy of narrative to represent the totality of a fictional world – it could be easily argued that all fictional worlds can be assumed to be distinct. It would follow that the primary point of individuation between fictional worlds could be that of indeterminate truth, since it is impossible to prove similarity or difference based on the information in the text. This position does, however, seem equally counterproductive as it is useful, since the opposing argument could just as easily be made. This position of exploiting the idea of indeterminate truths in fictional worlds is simply not practically helpful; it dismisses the question rather than responding to it. Using indeterminate truths as a practical argument also enables the critical reader to discuss fictional worlds in her own frame – to access the fictional world she wants – rather than to consider the reality conditions and states of affairs that can be verified.

I return here to Linda Hutcheon's view on adaptation, in which "although adaptations are also aesthetic objects in their own right, it is only as inherently double – or multilaminated works that they can be theorized *as adaptations*."[84] Although this thesis is focused on finding a way into – and through – the fictional world, when it comes to adaptations *as* adaptations, texts are indeed "inherently double – or multilaminated." In the pursuit of considering adaptations from the perspective of the fictional world, it is therefore helpful to consider "our memory of other works

[83] Palahniuk, *Fight Club,* 207.
[84] Hutcheon, *A Theory of Adaptation,* 6. Original emphasis.

that resonate through repetition with variation."[85] In this case, fictional worlds in texts which are adaptations, versions, or otherwise palimpsestuously related with another can be distinguished by a comparison of fictional worlds with the intention of practical analysis. Such a comparative analysis can help to differentiate between changes in the actual world existence of the text versus those of the fictional world. Changes in the fictional world in subsequent iterations might include changes in events, states of affairs, or even reality conditions. Changes in the actual world text which may not subsequently result in changes in the fictional world can include digital remastering, marketing, DVD formatting, or even omission (omission would make said omitted element an indeterminate proposition, if there is no direct proof that said event or fact was indeed absent from the adaptation's fictional world).

The *Star Wars* franchise, for example, is notorious for its versions and variations which produce distinct fictional worlds. *Star Wars: Episodes IV-VI* saw fundamental changes and re-releases after three prequel films were made. In the 1977 theatrical release of *Star Wars: Episode IV – A New Hope*, in a cantina on a planet names Mos Eisley, Han shoots an alien named Greedo dead before he has a chance to shoot back.[86] In the 1997 DVD release, the scene is altered so that Greedo shoots first, and in the 2004 DVD release, Han and Greedo shoot simultaneously.[87] It is impossible for three counterfactual situations to be true: Han shot first, Greedo shot first, no one shot first. The only possible solution is that alterations like this one (and many others across the trilogy) alter fictional facts which constitute reality conditions of each film, establishing alternate fictional worlds for each version. Versions which do not represent distinct fictional worlds have additional (or removed) narrative information which does not alter the reality conditions already described by the previous edition. *The Fellowship of the Rings,* part one of *The Lord of the Rings* film trilogy, for example, was released on DVD in both theatrical and extended versions.[88] In the extended editions, the reality conditions of the fictional world are unaltered, the only difference being that the viewer has access to more information about the fictional world through extended scenes. Editions can also depict the same fictional world, despite their publication differences: in America, J.K. Rowling's first Harry Potter novel was released as *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*, while it was released in the UK and elsewhere as *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone.*[89]

---

[85] Hutcheon, *A Theory of Adaptation*, 8.
[86] *Star Wars: Episode IV,* directed by George Lucas (Lucasfilm, 1977), film.
[87] *Star Wars: Episode IV,* directed by George Lucas, Special Edition (Lucasfilm, 1997), DVD.
Star Wars: Episode IV, directed by George Lucas, from the trilogy box set (Lucasfilm, 2004), DVD.
[88] *The Fellowship of the Ring*, directed by Peter Jackson (New Line Cinema, 2001), film.
The Fellowship of the Ring, directed by Peter Jackson, extended edition (New Line Cinema, 2002), DVD.
[89] J.K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* (Pennsylvania: Scholastic, 1998).

This change had reportedly been made for marketing reasons, due to a suspicion that the term 'sorcerer' sounds more magical for an American readership.[90] There is no difference to the fictional world as it is described by the contents of the narrative in either edition: all differences lay with publication, word choice and reader reception. Each edition and subsequent publication of the first Harry Potter novel describes the same fictional world, because there is no departure from established realities and the way in which these realities are manifest within the fictional world. This remains for other such alteration in subsequent publications, including correction of spelling, grammar, and form, marketing, alteration to title, and addition of footnotes, glossaries, maps, and appendices.

As seen above, fictional worlds in adapted texts are independent worlds whose intertextual resonance belongs to their actual world relationships. They can – and should – therefore be subject to the same fictional world-oriented critical methodology as non-adaptive texts. The above approach of using the actual world textual resonances of adaptations to parse information about the individualised fictional world does, however, give rise to the problem of referring to fictional worlds from adapted texts without referring to the fictional world itself as 'adapted.' As is most common in film studies when referring to adaptations of the same title (like *Solaris*), films are referred to by the author or director's name (for example, Soderbergh's *Solaris*). This is effective in differentiating between the texts themselves, but presents some complications within a fictional world-centric methodology. Referring to a fictional world by an author or director's name ties the fictional world itself to the actual world through the creator. While the creator is responsible for the narrative and the text which describes the fictional world, s/he is not responsible for the reality of the fictional world. The film – and not the fictional world – is Soderbergh's *Solaris*. A possible solution to this would involve a prefixed phrase in the modal style, such as "in the fictional world as it is described by the text of Soderbergh's *Solaris*." While this rectifies the problem of conflating fictional world and text, it is unwieldly and not wholly unproblematic, considering the vast number of crew required to 'author' a film, graphic novel, or other forms an adaptation might take. Another common method of differentiating adapted texts is referencing the date of publication or release (such as *Solaris* (1961)). This method is more concise than the above prefacing statement, and removes the problematic issues around single authorship. However, it binds any discussion of the fictional world to the historical, social and political context of the text, which again refocuses

J.K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* (London: Bloomsbury, 1997).

[90] Philip W. Errington, *J.K. Rowling: A Bibliography 1997-2013* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015), 90.

criticism on the actual world.[91] These fictional worlds described in adapted texts are their own independent worlds, and not versions of a single world. It seems, then, that it is nearly impossible to avoid embedding actual world information into the referential language around adaptations, and traditional ways of identifying texts (by author, director, or date) must still be used. However, I propose that these identification markers should only be used with the distinct understanding that they are being used as 'tags,' and not vessels for the fictional world. This will help maintain a clear focus on the fictional world as it differs from the actual world.

Now that the status of fictional worlds in adaptations has been addressed, the earlier discussion around characters as points of access into fictional worlds becomes complicated with respect to adaptations. Reality conditions do not flow between adaptations; changes to one world will not enact change in another established fictional world. This applies also to characters, which maintains the internal integrity of fictional worlds and their occupants. As Margolin points out (page 23), constitutive conditions for characters are that they exist, they are individual, and they are distinct/singular.[92] There are characters which do not fulfill these requirements across texts, and fail one or more condition through similarity across consecutive texts. These characters can be called trans-world, transient, or counterparts.[93] Transworld characters derives from the philosophy of possible worlds, in which one individual can exist in more than one world, as an "identity across possible worlds."[94] Transient characters are characters of one world which appear in others, and counterparts are individuals who are the closest possible (ie – more similar than any other individual) to a specific individual in a particular world and "is our substitute for identity between things in different worlds."[95] Margolin brings these perspectives together when referring to

---

[91] This dependency will be explored in Chapter Two with reference to Tarkovsky's *Solaris*.

[92] Margolin, "Individuals in Narrative Worlds," 849-854.

[93] I will be using these terms as broad concepts, although they are specific and complex aspects of possible world philosophy.
Charles Chihara, *The Worlds of Possibility* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998).
Saul Kripke, *Naming and Necessity* (Oxfod: Basil Blackwell, 1980).
David Lewis, "Counterpart Theory and Quantified Modal Logic," *The Journal of Philosophy*: 113-126.
David Lewis, *Counterfactuals* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1973).
David Lewis, *On the Plurality of Worlds* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986).
Lewis, "Truth in Fiction," 40-1.
Penelope Mackie, *How Things Might Have Been: Individuals, Kinds, and Essential Properties* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).
Alvin Plantinga, *The Nature of Necessity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1974).
Graham Priest, "Non-Transitive Identity," in *Cuts and Clouds: Vagueness, its Nature and its Logic*, Richard Dietz and Sebastiano Moruzzi eds. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010): 400-416.

[94] Penelope Mackie and Mark Jago, "Transworld Identity," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy,* edited by Edward N. Zalta (Winter 2017 Edition), plato.stanford.ede/archives/win2017/entries/identity-transworld/.

[95] Lewis, "Counterpart Theory and Quantified Modal Logic," 114.

prototypes, where "the first story or primary source of information about this IND [individual] defines the original or home world of the IND to which it is native. When the 'same' IND occurs in other story worlds, he is an immigrant in each of them;" in so doing, the 'prototype' develops 'surrogates' or 'counterparts' which inhabit other story worlds.[96]

In the comic *Deadpool Kills Deadpool,* for example, Deadpool kills other Deadpools by breaking into their worlds.[97] Deadpool can kill off other counterparts without fundamentally altering their existence in their own fictional worlds described in their own comic books. This is because, while he may have been in their story world, he stayed in his own fictional world. Most of the dead Deadpools are counterparts of themselves, as they appear in their own graphic novels in their own continuities. Following through Margolin's position in application to adaptations, however, the implication is that adapted characters are 'surrogates' of the original 'prototype,' therefore rupturing the individuation and independence of fictional worlds in adapted texts. I suggest that labels such as transient, transworld, counterpart and prototype are useful within the scope of a fictional world, such as in *Deadpool Kills Deadpool*. They are less useful, however, between fictional worlds. I therefore propose to consider characters in fictional worlds as individuals and, as when discussing the fictional worlds of adaptations, only use the actual word resonances of adaptation when it is a useful tool for critically parsing fictional world facts.

Having established the way in which I will be addressing fictional worlds, characters, and adaptations, I will now turn to the question of complexities within fictional worlds. Chapter Three of this project will take a modified view of what Daniel Yacavone terms the *world-in* view of fictional worlds. Yacavone contrasts the world-in view with the more usual *world-of* view. He describes the world-of view as seeking

> to describe and understand the nature and comprehension of fictional, narrated, or so-called diegetic worlds of represented places and events in a common space and time inhabited by characters, which are […] referenced and communicated through a film's audiovisual form. These accounts are largely self-limited to what films are

[96] Margolin, "Individuals in Narrative Worlds," 864-5.
Note that I am using story worlds here as worlds distinguished by particular plots and stories, as opposed to fictional worlds which are distinct fictional realities. Multiple story worlds can exist within the same fictional world, as will be seen in the case of the *Deadpool* comics, and later with *Pan's Labyrinth* in Chapter Four.
[97] Cullen Bunn, *Deadpool Kills Deadpool*, issues 1-4 (New York: Marvel, 2013).

> *about* in terms of a story rather than what they also *are*, as created, unified works […].[98]

Yacavone differentiates between the formal aspects of narratives which describe storyworlds (world-of), and what fictional worlds *are* as holistic created worlds, as well as what they might *mean.*[99] As described in the above sections detailing my critical approach, the world-in approach is crucial for recognising the internal cohesiveness and reality conditions of the fictional world. Yet for Yacavone, this world-in distinction is still tied to interpretive models, referring to fictional worlds as products of "unified works" that might carry a discernable meaning. This model clearly does not serve for my critical requirements of independent fictional worlds. However, Chapter Four explores the concept of flexible fictional realities, which can be manipulated by the characters themselves using properties of the mythic. In this context, characters struggle with the distinction between the world-of and the world-in, engaging directly with the authorial process of creating.

The mythic perspective mediates the distinction between the world-of and the world-in points of view. Recognition and engagement with the mythic in literature requires a clear distinction between the concepts of fantasy and the concept of myth.[100] For Tzvetan Todorov, the fantastic is an ephemeral experience, a moment of hesitation: "the fantastic occupies the time of uncertainty, from the moment we choose one or the other response, we leave the fantastic to enter a neighboring genre, the uncanny or the marvelous. The fantastic is that hesitation experienced by a person who knows only the laws of nature, confronting an apparently supernatural event."[101] The hesitation manifests when the reader encounters something which they cannot explain, and therefore must come to the conclusion that it is either uncanny (the supernatural explained as the natural) or the marvelous (the supernatural accepted as supernatural). According to Todorov, once this decision is made, the work ceases to be fantastic. This definition is useful, as it touches on the paradox of fantasy as a transient concept, particularly when the marvellous appears within a

---

[98] Daniel Yacavone, *Film Worlds: A Philosophical Aesthetics of Cinema* (Chichester: Columbia University Press, 2015), 3.
[99] Yacavone, *Film Worlds*, 4.
[100] I will not be providing an analysis of the genre of fantasy, as I examine the fictional world in the context of genre with respect to *Solaris* as science fiction in Chapter Two. Kathryn Hume, Rosemary Jackson, Lucie Armitt, and Farah Mendelsohn provide excellent resources for the analysis of fantasy as a genre.
Hume, *Fantasy and Mimesis*, 1984).
Rosemary Jackson, *Fantasy: The Literature of Subversion* (London: Routledge, 1995).
Lucie Armitt, *Theorising the Fantastic* (London: Arnold, 1996).
Farah Mendelsohn, *Rhetorics of Fantasy* (Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 2008).
Farah Mendelsohn and Edward James, *A Short History of Fantasy,* revised edition (Faringdon: Libri Publishing, 2012).
[101] Todorov, *The Fantastic*, 25.

fantastic text in the form of myth. By extension, Todorov's work exposes the tension between the position of the reader and the fictional world of the text. The fantastic and other fantasy elements are not considered so within the fictional world, but from the perspective of the reader and their understanding of their own reality conditions, including natural laws and states which do not align with those of the fictional world. Kathryn Hume obliquely refers to the emphasis fantasy literature places on the understanding of the actual world on the part of the reader. She calls this 'consensus reality,' a term which implies that we (as members of the actual world) form collective assumptions and rules concerning how our world works.[102] Fantasy (as a speculative fiction) is therefore a knowing departure from this consensus reality.

Myth presents an interesting case from within fictional worlds, since myth in the actual world is not easily defined or encapsulated, and therefore can be difficult to distinguish under the umbrella of fiction. Northrop Frye says of myth that "when what is written is *like* what is known, we have the art of extended or implied simile. And as realism *is* an art of implicit simile, myth is an art of implicit metaphorical identity."[103] He considers myth to be analogous to experience, but not its mirror. He goes further to say that "myth, then, is one extreme of literary design; naturalism is the other, and in between lies the whole area of romance, using that term to mean, […] the tendency […] to displace myth in a human direction and yet, in contrast to 'realism,' to conventionalize content in an idealised direction."[104] For Frye, then, myth is not at odds with rationality or truth, but with realism. Although Frye's perspective depends heavily on a structural (albeit a partially meta-structural) reading of myth as a literary form, his perspective proves useful when considering how mythic inclusions can distort a characters' relationship to their own perception of reality. In novels like *American Gods* and *Anansi Boys*, the mythic is part of the reality conditions of the fictional world, and there is no avoiding it. In these situations, then, in order to accommodate the mythic, it is necessary for aspects of the fictional reality to be displaced "in an idealised direction."

---

[102] Hume, *Fantasy and Mimesis*, 21.
Brian Attebery points out in *Stories About Stories* that not everyone shares the same consensus reality, depending on which laws are being used to establish this concept. The example he provides is his neighbor suggesting he gets an exorcism rather than a tune-up to fix his car. With enough specificity, the idea of consensus reality could collapse altogether into individuals' points of view. Consensus realities are therefore formed with generalised rather than specific concepts.
Brian Attebery, *Stories About Stories: Fantasy and the Remaking of Myth* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 140.
[103] Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism,* 136..
[104] Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism,* 136-7.

Paul Ricoeur takes another perspective on the mythic, stating that it is "a disclosure of unprecedented worlds, an opening on to other *possible* worlds which transcend the established limits of our *actual* world."[105] Where Frye posits a continuum between our ideas of the real and the idealisation of myth, Ricoeur distinguishes the content of myth as alternative – another possible world entirely. Pavel provides a formal schema which allows for the inclusion of the mythic – which is, as Frye points out, at odds with realism – within a fictional world without undermining the reality of that world, and which accounts for Ricoeur's position. He distinguishes between 'flat' and 'salient' ontologies of fictional worlds, which are always presented relative to characters. The flat structure is "composed of just one universe containing a base, the actuality, […] [and] they allow for no alternative base for any movement outside the given actuality and its constellation of possibilities."[106] This is the primary fictional world which has its own natural laws and in which no element breaks those laws. Conversely, according to Pavel, a fictional world may have a salient structure: "we may distinguish between primary and secondary universes within dual structures, the former constituting the foundation upon which the latter is built."[107] Essentially, salient structures contain those states of affairs which are not included (or do not have referents) in the primary fictional world. Examples that Pavel provides for salient structures are sacred regions such as religion, and plural possibilities within one fictional world such as Don Quixote's view that windmills are giants versus Sancho Panza's view that windmills are windmills.[108]

Pavel's structure is very useful is positing that there can be alterations to fictional facts within a fictional world without fundamentally disrupting the rest of the fictional world. However, his rigid demarcation, while necessary when viewing fictional worlds under the umbrella of possible worlds theory, does not seem to accurately represent the ways in which characters manipulate and flex their engagement with reality. In the case of *Don Quixote,* for example, it is not necessary for there to be a salient ontology in which windmills are giants. It is entirely possible – and likely, within the novel – that Don Quixote perceives the windmills to be giants, while Sancho perceives them as windmills. Their views, while at odds, are not in violation of the reality conditions of the fictional world. This is increasingly obvious as the novel goes on, and Don Quixote and Sancho continue to be able to enjoy each other's company, despite their radically distinct views of their world. Instead, I would propose that Don Quixote is constituting for himself a cohesive mythic space which

---

[105] Paul Ricoeur, *The Symbolism of Evil* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1991), 490. Quoted in Laurence Coupe, *Myth* (London: Routledge, 1997), 8.
[106] Pavel, *Fictional Worlds*, 54.
[107] Pavel, *Fictional Worlds*, 57.
[108] Miguel de Saavedra Cervantes, *Don Quixote,* trans. Edith Grossman (London: Secker and Warburg, 2004). Pavel, *Fictional Worlds*, 61.

becomes increasingly real for him as he continues to interact with it. In this way, the malleability which is the privilege of fiction allows for a more flexible foundation for reality than exactly that proposed by Pavel.

In addition to the important question of reality, myth in literature also seems to necessitate an actual world intertextual network. Brian Attebery posits that myth "designate[s] any collective story that encapsulates a world view and authorizes belief."[109] Attebery considers myth to be collective, and therefore it requires a synchronic perspective, which is counterproductive for my position in that it prioritises the actual world. He does go on to state that myth in literary texts is mythology robbed of its historic and cultural purpose: "literary texts do not come immersed in belief systems, ways of life, and interpretive schemata, as do myths in oral cultures. That is the other part of fantasy's mythic method, to provide living contexts to replace the ones stripped from mythic texts."[110] He sees the mythic in literary texts as a bare version of contextualised traditional storytelling and performance, seeming to imply that literary texts have done a violence ("stripped from") to traditional storytelling in the process. He does, however, posit that the literary text establishes a different context within which the myths maintain an altered ideological and social power.

Attebery's proposition that contemporary literary myths constitute alternative contextual spheres for mythology is evident in contemporary literature. Selected retellings like Roger D. Abraham's *African Folktales*, Neil Gaiman's *Norse Mythology,* and Steven Fry's *Heroes* and *Mythos* tell ancient stories for consumption by a contemporary audience, through which the modifications of ancient stories participate in a contemporary social and intertextual context, renewing their relevance and longevity.[111] Novels like Margaret Atwood's *The Penelopiad* engage readers in a political feminist twist on the familiar story of *The Odyssey,* and others like Rick Riordan's *The Lightning Thief* re-engage younger generations in classical mythologies by modernising its setting and targeting a younger audience with teenage characters.[112] I argue that Attebery does not go far enough in this direction. In a text, familiar mythic connections do reinforce intertextual connections

---

[109] Attebery, *Stories About Stories,* 2.
[110] Attebery, *Stories About Stories*, 50.
[111] Roger D. Abrahams, *African Folktales* (London: The Folio Society, 2016).
Neil Gaiman, *Norse Mythology* (London: Bloomsbury, 2018)
Stephen Fry, *Heroes* (UK: Michael Joseph, 2018).
Stephen Fry, *Mythos* (UK: Michael Joseph, 2017).
[112] Margaret Atwood, *The Penelopiad* (Edinburgh: Canongate Books, 2008).
Homer, *the Odyssey*, translated by Emily R. Wilson (London: W.W. Norton and Company, 2018).
Rick Riordan, *The Lightning Thief,* Percy Jackson and the Olympians (London: Puffin Books: 2006).

and dependencies. In a fictional world, the mythic can take on a more pragmatic and flexible stance. In Ryan North's graphic novel *The Midas Flesh,* for instance, King Midas' touch is so potent that it turns the entire planet Earth to gold.[113] His preserved body (the only thing saved from the 'gift') is discovered far in the future, his finger harvested by the interspecies crew of a space ship to be used as a transfiguring weapon against other spacecraft. *The Midas Flesh* put classical myth in dialogue with the intertextual spheres of science fiction, visual arts, popular culture, and (quasi-) scientific discourse (Midas' flesh is not decomposed after thousands of years because his golden touch means that no bacteria or other decomposers survived contact). *The Midas Flesh* also shows a fictional world existence for Midas's golden curse which does not depend on any linkages with its many traditional manifestations, and which enables the laws which govern Midas' curse in the graphic novel to differ from those in the classical myth. In the graphic novel, Midas' power turns everything he touches into gold. In addition, objects made golden turn everything that *they* touch into gold. As a result, within minutes of obtaining his 'gift' of golden touch, the entirety of Earth and everything on it was turned to gold and thus destroyed. This also means that the slightest touch of Midas' flesh could be used as a powerful weapon, where one touch would turn an entire ship and its crew into metal. This law is part of the reality of the fictional world. Earth is entirely gold, and the crew of the spaceship use a severed finger to destroy an attacking spacecraft. There is no necessity for the traditional myth to exist in the context of the fictional world because the context and ideology in *The Midas Flesh* are the only operators for the characters within the fictional world. The reality of the completely destructive Midas touch in *The Midas Flesh* is therefore in no way contingent upon the limited effects of Midas' curse in the classical tradition.

In Chapter Three, I suggest the existence of mythopoeic voice, where a character creates a mythic reality by speaking or willing it into being. This is an extension of the flexibility and independence of fictional myth, seen above. Characters with mythopoeic voice construct mythic spaces which are embedded within the fictional world itself. This mythic space is not a 'salient structure,' syphoned off of the reality of the fictional world, but Pavel's conceptualisation can once again be useful here. As will be evidenced in *Anansi Boys* and *Pan's Labyrinth* in the upcoming chapters, manifestations of mythopoeic voice are indeed interactional, as characters directly manipulate created objects and are even lost in mythic time. However, with a slight nod to Pavel's model, it is also possible to note that these constructions of mythopoeic voice do not necessarily fundamentally or permanently alter the reality conditions of the fictional world. When the mythic becomes part of the reality conditions within the fictional world (whether it is for one character or

[113] Ryan North, *The Midas Flesh: Volume 1* (Los Angeles: BOOM! Studios, 2014).

many), seeing the fictional world from Yacavone's world-in perspective becomes increasingly necessary. The contexts of the fictional world become the consensus reality against which fantastic and mythic inclusions are judged, and the role of the actual world reader dissolves behind the fantastic voices of a mythopoeic character.

It is therefore possible that the fictional world might be distorted or distended by a non-consensus inclusion, such as with elements of the mythic or mythopoeic voice. It is also possible that the reader or viewer might perceive such a distortion of the consensus reality or reality conditions of a fictional world without that distortion manifesting in the same way within the world itself. Chapter Four looks closely at time in film, which is one of the ways in which these distortions might present differently for the audience than for the characters themselves. In the discussion of *Cronos, The Devil's Backbone,* and *Pan's Labyrinth* I will be extending the views already discussed in this section to include considerations of time within the fictional world. In particular, I will be reflecting on the concepts of distinction (Currie and Cardwell), duration (Bergson and Deleuze), and experience (Mroz) as they can be applied to the fictional world.

Gregory Currie points out that narrative arts like film have a different temporal nature than many other art forms. Unlike some less temporal art forms (for example painting or sculpture), in which time is related to aging (time elapsing in our world, resulting in the painting itself getting older), in narrative arts (like film and literature), time *unfolds*.[114] This is to say, there are "temporal relations between constitutive elements of the work," meaning that there is a temporal relationship within the elements of the fiction itself, as well as the temporal relationship of the physical text with our world.[115] Film therefore "represents time by means of time," using images that take up time on screen (elapsed real-world time) to represent fictional happenings that would unfold in story-time.[116] It is important here to make clear the distinction between the image content (the actors, sets, and other real-world contents of the image itself) and the representation of the fiction (the characters, fictional world, and other elements of the fiction).[117] In this case, we are discussing the representations of the fiction and not the content of the image. Currie uses this point of view to address what he calls the Claim of Presentness by considering the relevance of using tense to think about film. The Claim of Presentness is a position which arises from earlier claims as to the status of time in film, and argues that film is a persistent experience of present tense.[118] Brian

[114] Gregory Currie, *Image and Mind* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 93.
[115] Currie, *Image and Mind,* 93.
[116] Currie, *Image and Mind,* 103.
[117] Currie, *Image and Mind,* 200.
[118] Bluestone, *Novels into Film*.

Henderson provides an alternative to the perceived insistent present of film by proposing that films are inherently tenseless.[119] However, by doing so he glosses considerations of both the duration of the narrative, as well as time elapsed offscreen (such as during jump cuts). Similarly, David Bordwell established a descriptive system of time in which the time of the viewer's interpretive action, as well as the mechanical time of the film, generates a more fluid concept of film time that is freed from the concept of tense.[120]

The positions of Henderson and Bordwell, however, require that the viewer imagines that they are watching the fictional events from within the story world itself, experiencing them as they actually unfold.[121] Currie does not believe that films are inherently tenseless. Instead, he argues that "the failure of cinema to represent fictional events as tensed is a failure to represent them as tensed *from the perspective of the viewer*, not from that of the characters."[122] Here, Currie carefully distinguishes between the temporal experience of the viewer, and the temporal experience of the characters. Sarah Cardwell joins Currie in this view, stating that arguments such as those explored above tend to obscure important ideas with respect to film time and actual world time by conflating them.[123] Currie's and Cardwell's arguments realise the importance of renaturing the critical language around temporality in film in order to recognise the distinction and independence of worlds. This is an essential distinction, one which places the experience of film time within the fictional world, untouchable by the temporal flow of the actual world. It is therefore Currie's position, supported by Cardwell's, which will influence my analysis in Chapter Four.

Although Currie and Cardwell's emphasis on the fictional world's unfolding experience of time is crucial, philosopher Henri Bergson's concept of duration will also feature in my analysis in Chapter Four. Duration and 'clock time' form polarities within Bergson's work. He believes that duration is an expression of psychic time, a project of mental synthesis,[124] whereas clock time is a

---

Brian McFarlane, *Novel to Film: an Introduction to the Theory of Adaptation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995).
Seymour Chatman, *Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film* (London: Cornell University Press, 1978), 63.

[119] Brian Henderson, "Tense, Mood, and Voice in Film (Notes after Genette)," *Film Quarterly* 36, no. 4 (1983).

[120] Bordwell, *Narration in the Fiction Film* (London: Methuen and Co., Ltd., 1985), 74-76.

[121] Currie, *Image and Mind*, 201.

[122] Currie, *Image and Mind*, 218. Original emphasis.

[123] Sarah Cardwell, "Present(ing) Tense: Temporality and Tense in Comparative Theories of Literature-Film Adaptation," *Literature/Film Quarterly* 31, no. 2 (2003), 82-92.

[124] Henri Bergson, *Key Writings,* eds. Keith Ansell-Pearson and John Ó Maoilearca, trans. Melissa McMahon (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), 120.

magnitude, and therefore measurable.[125] For Bergson, duration is oriented on the experience of the present: "the real, concrete, live present – […] necessarily occupies a duration. […] What I call 'my present' has one foot in my past and another in my future."[126] He refers to the present as a composite of past and future, because the exact 'present' image is impossible moment to capture; in the act of considering it or vocalising it, it becomes a past memory of sensations that are no longer being experienced.[127] But the present cannot be restricted to the past, or it would cease to be 'present.' As such, it is also bound to the future, which feeds the continued experience of 'present,' keeping it from being the exclusive domain of the sensory past. Bergson considers the present to be in essence sensory-motor,[128] highlighting his belief not only in the continuous (non-discrete) nature of the present, but also that duration (being the experience of the present) is intrinsically connected to mental synthesis, the psychic and rhythmic experience of time. It is therefore directly opposed to 'clock time,' calendar time, or chronological time. By positioning measurable time against duration, Bergson implies that measurable time is homogenous, conceptually dependent on space (for example, the frame rate of a film).[129] His perspective on film considers it to be a clock experience of time, rather than one of duration; he believed that its production method breaks down movement and experience into static single frames, which are then re-imbued with movement when it is run through a projector.[130] This led him to the conclusion that film time is not the interpenetrative continuum of the time of human consciousness.[131]

Gilles Deleuze addresses Bergson's ideas that duration is not part of film time, and distinguishes between the Genettian term 'duration' (as measurable) and the Bergsonian term 'duration' (as a mentally synthesized continuum).[132] Like Bergson, Deleuze sees time as a split: "it splits in two dissymmetrical jets, one of which makes all the present pass on, while the other preserves all past."[133] There is a split between the present and the past which composes the present

---

[125] Bergson, *Key Writings,* 107-8.
[126] Bergson, *Key Writings,* 155.
[127] Bergson, *Key Writings,* 159.
[128] Bergson, *Key Writings,* 155
[129] Matilda Mroz, *Temporality and Film Analysis* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012), 3.
Bergson, *Key Writings*, 7.
[130] Totaro, Donato, "Time, Bergson, and the Cinematographical Mechanism: Henri Bergson on the Philosophical Properties of Cinema," *Offscreen* 5, no. 1 (2001), offscreen.com.view/bergson1.
[131] Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema I: The Movement-Image*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam (London: Continuum, 2005) 1-3.
Mroz, *Temporality and Film Analysis,* 37.
[132] Gérard Genette, *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method,* trans. Jane E.Lewin (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1980): 87.
[133] Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 2: the Time-Image*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Robert Galeta (London: Continuum, 2005), 79.

(Deleuze calls this moment the 'crystal-image'), similar to how Bergson frames his idea of the present that is the foundation of duration. This is "the perpetual foundation of time, non-chronological time, Cronos and not Chronos."[134] Deleuze and Bergson therefore agree on the nature of the 'present' experience, whether it is duration or the crystal-image, and that this is connected to the experience of time passing, as well as the concept of time as a continuum. However, Deleuze disagrees with Bergson on the nature of time in film. Whereas Bergson sees cinematic images as a mechanical breakdown and illusory re-constitution of motion, Deleuze sees mobility, the essence of movement, as the fluid manifestation of time itself within the cinematic image. Rather than collapsing film into story and plot, Deleuze discusses film as an experiential whole, of which time is a fundamental element of cinema rather than simply a by-product of the cinematic mechanism. Although Deleuze frees film time from mechanisation, his argument does not overtly allow for discussion of the fictional world since it binds time to movement and representation of form in a visual medium. However, using Bergson and Deleuze's conceptualisations and a starting point, it is possible to extend the fracture between Cronos and Chronos into the fictional reality. Relocating the idea of duration (as a non-chronological experience of 'present' time) to the personage of the character rather than the viewer can enable such a reading. By situating the character as the one who experiences duration, any previously essential referential linkages from the actual world to the fictional world are broken. The passage of time in the fictional world therefore becomes the chronological time against which duration can be posited with reference to the behaviour of characters.

Situating the character as the site of duration in the fictional world is potentially problematic, as the viewer does not have direct access to the subjective experience of the character. In this case, Matilda Mroz's perspective proves a useful point of departure. She seeks to draw out "resonances," ways in which films impact the viewer bodily and affectively.[135] Mroz therefore does not believe in referring to film time as 'flat,' 'still,' or measurable. Instead, she talks about depth, movement, and flux, which allows for the abstract experience of time to recall Bergson's duration more than Deleuze's crystal-image.[136] Her position is related to the sensory or embodied approach to temporality, and considers how time as a sensorial experience can "put

---

[134] Deleuze, *Cinema 2*, 79.
This distinction prompts a connection with the film *Cronos*, discussed in Chapter Four. Seeming to physicalise Deleuze's distinction, *Cronos* seems to fracture along the lines of chronological and non-chronological time as the young Aurora appears completely at odds with the temporalities of her world and of the narrative.

[135] Mroz, *Temporality and Film Analysis,* 5.

[136] Mroz, *Temporality and Film Analysis,* 53, 56-59.

meaning into flux" and disrupt other theoretical approaches.[137] Mroz works with Bergson and Deleuze's ideas of time, but changes their application to a viewer's film experience rather than the visual emphasis espoused by Deleuze. The sensory perspective which underscored Mroz' arguments is concerned with the embodied viewer, prioritising her physical or visceral response to a film's narration. Although the clear emphasis on the experience of the viewer here is problematic for my position, Mroz' concepts of resonance and flux can help a critical audience to reflect an empathetic or sympathetic embodied response in the viewer onto the character's experience. By 'flipping' an embodied response into positive engagement with the fictional world, it is possible to consider the internal environment of a character as it relates to their experience of time, such as with the experience of the uncanny child Santi in *The Devil's Backbone* (discussed in Chapter Four). This process provides a foundation on which the viewer can simulate the experience of a character within the reality of the fictional world and as a result, frame the effects of durational experience from within the fictional world. Using a highly subjective approach when approaching time in fictional worlds also provides grounds for an analysis which extends the limitations of narration. In *Pan's Labyrinth*, for example, it becomes clear that the narrative continuity of the film is itself subjectively distorted by Ofelia's mythopoeic reality as it fails to keep pace with the events in the rest of the fictional world.

Each of the following chapters in this thesis will apply the above theoretical material to the chosen texts in order to test and exemplify their use in a fictional world-centric approach.

[137] Mroz, *Temporality and Film Analysis,* 4.

Part Two: Critical Readings

Chapter One: I am Jack's Subjective Representation of *Fight Club* – Issues of Narration and Character

This chapter deals closely with questions of narration and character with respect to Chuck Palahniuk's 1996 novel *Fight Club* and David Fincher's 1999 film of the same name. Each text manifests unreliability in its narration, and therefore present a difficulty for a fictional world-centric approach by prioritising the reader's or viewer's actual world experience of the text. In Palahniuk's novel, the unreliability is intertwined with the Narrator's subjective experience, blurring the facts of the fictional world in a self-referential puzzle. In Fincher's film, multiple levels of narration create an authoritative hierarchy, which hides and misrepresents the reality of the fictional world.

Building on the concepts of fictional world and character established in Part One, and using narrative theory and close reading, this chapter will explore how the fractures of unreliability allow a reader or viewer to gain access to the fictional world as it is 'objectively' perceived by all the characters, not just the subjective narrator. In doing so, this chapter will show how the character and their experience, even when it is not an accurate representation of the fictional world, allows the reader or viewer to access the reality of the fictional world.

Dancing With Myself – Narration and Character in Palahniuk's *Fight Club*

When reading Chuck Palahniuk's *Fight Club*, in addition to a narrator's notoriously unreliable narration, a devious intent and narrative delusion have a subjective and changeable relationship with the reality of the fictional world. *Fight Club* follows the insomniac experiences of the Narrator as he encounters Marla Singer, a support group addict, and the enigmatic Tyler Durden. After his apartment is destroyed, the Narrator moves into a dilapidated home with Tyler and they form a men's fight club, which grows under Tyler's leadership into an anti-consumer culture organisation. The Narrator comes to learn that his insomnia and trauma led to his personality fracturing into two, and that he is in fact Tyler; this leads to the conclusion of the novel, in which he and Marla deal with the fallout of Tyler's actions. This fractured identity is reflected in fractured narration where chronological and narrative continuities are altered or obfuscated for the reader. The effects of the Narrator's internal subjective experience therefore obscure the reality of the fictional world as it

might exist from the perspective of consensus reality.[138] This does not, however, indicate that the reader's inferences about the lies and deceptions of the narration are the sole arbiter of what 'really happens' in *Fight Club.* Instead, by relocating the subjective narration within the fictional world, it becomes possible to understand the interplay of the Narrator's reality and the consensus reality.

As a notorious example of unreliable narration, *Fight Club* provides an excellent example to interrogate the assumed linkages between the fictional world, the character, narration, and the reader. Unreliable narration is narration which does not seem to accurately account for the states of affairs within the fictional world. According to James Phelan, a narrator reports, interprets, and evaluates.[139] This therefore puts the role of the narrator – who, in the case of *Fight Club*, is a character in the story – as one whose role is to communicate directly to the reader. An unreliable narrator is one who fails in any or all of the three tasks in "misreporting, misinterpreting, and misevaluating (in these cases readers need to reject the narrator's version and, if possible, replace it with another one) and by underreporting, underreading, and underevaluating (in these cases readers need to supplement the narrator's version)."[140] Phelan even goes so far as to say that the reader can – and indeed must – actively participate in the act of narration in order to access the story when faced with unreliable narration. In *Fight Club,* the narrator has a fractured personality, one of whom is the Narrator and one of whom is Tyler Durden.[141] Only Tyler is aware of both personalities for the majority of the novel, and so the narration, entirely in the voice of the Narrator, is misreporting and misinterpreting the majority of events.

The body of the novel is a prolonged flashback, with the 'present' as a frame. In this present frame, the Narrator is aware of his double self, and is not during the prolonged flashback. The

---

[138] Hume, *Fantasy and Mimesis*, xi.
As mentioned in Part One (pages 26, 35 and 38) and in Chapter Three (Pages 106 and 107), consensus reality is the averaged experience of reality. Although Hume uses it to refer to our mutually coherent experience of the actual world, when used in reference to the fictional world, consensus reality allows us to discuss the fictional world as it might be perceived by all inhabitants of the fictional world. In the case of *Fight Club*, the Narrator's experience of reality is distinct from the consensus reality of the fictional world as a result of his mental ill health.

[139] Phelan, *Narrative Theory*, 34.

[140] Phelan, *Narrative Theory,* 34.

[141] The protagonist remains unnamed in the entirety of the novel. This serves to reinforce the extreme subjectivity of the narration, as the narrator does not need to refer to himself by name in his own experience. It also helps to obfuscate the distinction between the Narrator and Tyler, as Tyler steps in to an 'empty' space left by the unidentified self. In many critical analyses of the novel and film, academics call the Narrator 'Jack,' in reference to his tendency to imitate a *Reader's Digest* series he read which discusses internal organs and inanimate objects in the personified first person. In this chapter, I will keep the named individual as 'The Narrator' in order to preserve the implied subjectivity and 'emptiness' of character. I will refer to the Narrator as an individual within the fictional world with a capital 'N,' whereas I will refer to the narrative voices as a function with a lowercase 'n' in order to avoid a confusion of terms.

reader is not given sufficient information to know of the Narrator's fractured personality from the opening frame. For this reason, the structure of the novel itself is often pointed to as the primary culprit for the novel's unreliability, since crucial information is concealed for the majority of the work, resulting in an extended misrepresentation of events. This textual approach, however, is not useful for a consideration of the impact that narrative unreliability has on a critical reader's access to the fictional world. This is, in part, because this structural unreliability is not relevant to the fictional world: the characters do not zoom forward and back in time. It is the narration of events which is out of order, and not the events themselves. The text-based approach hinges on the sequential engagement the reader has with information, which is then constantly evaluated, amended (if necessary) for the sake of coherence, and then reapplied to the subsequent narrative events and narration. Alice Jeličková, however, points out that using the reader – and their referential reliance on the actual world for information on coherence and logic – is insufficient. She argues that:

> Obviously, the clues for narrative judgements were subject to a reconsideration in the process of reading: our reading shifted from creating a mental image or at least a structure of the storyworld compatible with the 'normal' world – and evaluating the reliability of the narrator on the axis of facts – to qualifying the relation of the storyworld as a whole to the particular temporary social domains as well as the private worlds of the characters. As a result, we do not have to judge whether the narrator gives a reliable report on their nature, but rather whether their autonomous existence may be vindicated within the storyworld. The gauge of the reliability of the narrator obviously is not located along the axis of facts.[142]

Jeličková points out that using facts about the actual world to frame a cohesive response and evaluation of a potentially unreliable narration is not as useful when applied to a storyworld.[143] She advocates that the reader should "qualif[y] the relation of the storyworld as a whole" to the "private worlds of the characters" equally to a textual qualification. The outcome of this would be that unreliability hinges on "whether their autonomous existence may be vindicated within the

[142] Alice Jeličková, "An Unreliable Narrator in an Unreliable World, Negotiating Between Rhetorical Narratology, Cognitive Studies and Possible Worlds Theory," in *Narrative Unreliability in the Twentieth-Century First-Person Novel*, edited by Elk D'hoker and Gunther Martens (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2008), 296.

[143] Jeličková also makes reference to using structures of possible worlds theory to evaluate narrative unreliability, hence her use of storyworld. In this case, she is not using it in precisely the way in which I use fictional world, although she does refer to a difference between unreliable narration and unreliability within the world of a given story.

storyworld." This approach to 'vindication' of the autonomous existence of "temporary social domains" and "private worlds of the characters" is especially helpful in texts like Yann Martel's novel *Life of Pi*, where the conclusion of the novel throws all narrative events as they are recounted by Pi into doubt as to whether the subjective or objective version of an experience is more truthful.[144] Jeličková's position is slightly different to the one I will take, but the critical move she makes in reframing the source of unreliability to the fictional world is a crucial one. In a similar move, I will be reframing the ensuing discussion of narration and unreliability within the fictional world, with the goal of identifying and distinguishing the fictional world from the unreliable subjective reality of the Narrator.

According to Brian Richardson, unreliable narration can reproduce a "jagged fissure within a single subjectivity" and can "define more sharply or collapse more effectively conventional distinctions between different characters, competing narrative worlds, or tale and frame."[145] This jagged fissure between Tyler and the Narrator becomes equally problematic for the reader as a direct result of the narrative focalisation of the novel on the Narrator's experience.[146] Examining the point of unreliability in *Fight Club* distils out the narrative, narration, and the contents of the fictional world, allowing for a more precise view of what can be achieved with these distinctions. The body of the novel is an extended flashback. It opens with the final confrontation between the Narrator and Tyler, then moves backward in time to the beginning of the causal narrative. It is possible to identify four types of knowledge about the story, supported by this extended flashback structure, some of which directly engage the reader with the reality of the fictional world, some

---

[144] Pi is a survivor of a shipwreck at sea. The novel is Pi's subjective recounting of his experience surviving in a lifeboat for an extended period of time. His story has him in the boat with an ever-dwindling menagerie of exotic zoo animals. At the request of his listeners, Pi tells the 'true' story of his ordeal in which the animals are an extended metaphor for Pi's traumatic experiences, including the loss of his parents at the hands of other survivors. The facts of the fictional world are horrific, so Pi and his listeners decide to stay with the animal-based story as the 'official' account.
Yann Martel. *Life of Pi: A Novel* (Toronto: Vintage Canada, 2002).

[145] Brian Richardson, *Unnatural Voices: Extreme Narration in Modern and Contemporary Fiction* (Ohio: The Ohio State University Press, 2006), 67.

[146] Emma Donoghue's novel *Room* demonstrates this same effect of defining characters more sharply than might otherwise be the case. *Room* is narrated by Jack, a five year old boy who has been imprisoned in a one-room shed with his mother for his entire life. His entire reality is therefore limited to the scope of the room, his mother never having told him that the outside world exists. However, through Jack's description of ritual points in his day – such as when he and his mother scream out the skylight every night – the separation between Jack's ability to fully recount the nature of his experience and the actual state of affairs in the shed as they are acutely experienced by his mother becomes ever clearer. In this case, Jack is not misrepresenting the fictional world, but his evaluation of them is limited. The reader sees past this limitation based on given facts about Jack's experience, and can begin to glimpse the objective reality of the fictional world.
Emma Donoghue, *Room* (London: Picador, 2010).

which allow the reader access to the Narrator, and some of which belong to the actual world. These distinctions can be related to what the Narrator behaves or speaks as if he knows. The Narrator's (un)awareness of his fractured personality is the point of origin to the unreliable narration, and provides a point of access where the critical reader can evaluate the reality of the fictional world, the reality and it is perceived by the characters, and the role of narration in accessing these differing perspectives.

*Fight Club'*s unreliable narration enforces an extreme subjective narrative voice which figures strongly into critical work around political embodiment,[147] the individual's role in consumer culture and its politics,[148] and identity.[149] However, it also obscures the reality conditions of the fictional world to an extent that it is no longer certain that the text and narrative accurately depict the states of affairs of the fictional world. Gregory Currie asks a key question concerning the relationship between fictional worlds and their texts:

> For how does a particular fictional world, *w, get to be* the fictional world of [the given text]? Not because of any straightforward fit between the meaning of the text and world *w;* we want to say that, since this is an unreliable narrative, the text *misdescribes w*. So what extratextual mechanism links the text to this world and no other? More than one answer is possible, but whatever answer is favoured, the locus of our interest in the nature of unreliability must surely be the mechanism itself and not the world that mechanism locates. For it is in the workings of that mechanism that we shall find the justification for saying, 'the text is a misdescription of this world, rather than a correct description of that one.'[150]

Currie here questions whether a fictional world can be represented by an unreliable narrative, considering that the definition of unreliability is that the narrative misrepresents that world. There

---

[147] Olivia Burgess, "Revolutionary Bodies in Chuck Palahniuk's *Fight Club,*" *Utopian Studies* 23, no. 1 (2012): 263-280.
J. Michael Clark, "Faludi, *Fight Club,* and Phallic Masculinity: Exploring the Emasculating Economics of Patriarchy," *Journal of Men's Studies* 11, no. 1 (2002): 65-76.
Krister Friday, "'A Generation of Men Without History': *Fight Club*, Masculinity, and the Historical Symptom," *Postmodern Culture* 13, no. 3 (May 2003): DOI: 10.1353/pmc.2003.0016.
[148] William Irwin, "*Fight Club*, Self-Definition, and the Fragility of Authenticity," *Revista Portuguesa de Filosofia* 69, no. 3/4 (2013): 673-684.
Omar Lizardo, "*Fight Club,* or the Cultural Contradictions of Late Capitalism," *Journal for Cultural Research* 11, no. 3 (2007): 221-243.
[149] Alex Tuss, "Masculine Identity and Success: A Critical Analysis of Patricia Highsmith's *The Talented Mr. Ripley* and Chuck Palahniuk's *Fight Club," Journal of Men's Studies* 12, no. 2 (Winter 2004): 93-102.
[150] Gregory Currie, "Unreliability Refigured: Narrative in Literature and Film," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 53, no. 1 (Winter 1995): 19-20. Original Emphasis.

is a fundamental rupture here between the critical reader who analyses the world of the text and the critical reader who analyses the fictional world. Currie believes the conflict inherent in unreliable narration is between the external perspective of the 'implied author' and the internal perspective of the conceptual narrator, since the fictional world (Currie's world *w)* cannot properly fit within such an unreliable narrative.[151] This is a useful dichotomy if the goal is a medium-specific analysis like Currie's because the space between these two positions is that of the text (including its medium) and the reader. When the goal is to glimpse reality conditions of the fictional world, these two positions of externalised implied author and internalised narrator are therefore not the most helpful. I also suggest a slight amendment to Currie's statement that "our interest in the nature of unreliability must surely be in the mechanism itself," to include that our interest in reliability must surely be in the mechanism itself but also that which prompts the condition of unreliability in that mechanism – namely, the misdescribed fictional world. I propose that it is the relationship between the (often internalized) subjective perspective of the narrator and the evidenced consensus reality of the fictional world which can be useful in this respect.

Creating a comparison between the subjective internalised voice of the narration of and the consensus reality of the fictional world can only begin with the information we have access to – what Currie might call the mechanism of an unreliable narrative. In *Fight Club*, this is the form and voice of the Narrator. It is possible to distinguish four different aspects of the Narrator's relationship to the fictional world, including his intermittent hints at the consensus reality of the fictional world. First, the Narrator appears to be fully aware that he and Tyler are the same person from the beginning of the novel. Despite this, the narration seems to deliberately conflate the Narrator and Tyler:

> "This isn't really death," Tyler says. "We'll be legend. We won't grow old."
>
> I tongue the barrel into my cheek and say, Tyler, you're thinking of vampires. […]
>
> I know this because Tyler knows this.[152]

In this instance, the Narrator references the 'objective' or consensus reality in which Tyler and the Narrator are one, by stating that "I know this because Tyler knows this", with 'because' forming a parallel between Tyler's consciousness and his own. He acknowledges that from the perspective of another character, the two are indistinguishable. The Narrator also reinforces the difference in his

[151] Currie, "Unreliability Refigured," 20.
[152] Palahniuk, *Fight Club*, 11-12.

subjective experience from that of the consensus reality by clearly distinguishing between the first person ("I tongue the barrel into my cheek") and the second person ("Tyler, you're thinking of vampires"). By wavering between integrating and separating himself and Tyler, the narration therefore constructs a dichotomy between the subjective internalised voice of the Narrator and the Narrator's awareness that his perspective may not be that of other inhabitants of the fictional world.

A second aspect of this passage which helps to distinguish the fictional world from the world of the text is that the Narrator seems to authenticate Tyler's individuality while simultaneously undermining the authority of his own voice. Again, Currie provides a helpful starting point, explaining this effect "as a result of there being a certain kind of *complex intention* on the part of the implied author. […] An agent can […] creat[e] or presen[t] something which she intends will be taken as evidence of her intentions, and she intends that superficial evidence will suggest that her intention was X, whereas a better, more reflective grasp of the evidence will suggest that her intention was Y."[153] Again, Currie points to the implied author, carried in the internalised narrative voice as a conceptualisation of character voice as the culprit. He argues that the narrator has a textual reader-oriented intent, which is at odds with what is actually being revealed. Currie's perspective, readjusted to look at the character and the fictional world (rather than the implied author and the text) demonstrates that, for his own reasons, the Narrator obfuscates the distinction between Tyler and himself. One way in which he does this is through direct and quasi-indirect speech, marked in the text as punctuation. Tyler's speech is direct, marked with quotation marks ("this isn't really death"). The Narrator's speech is not distinguished by punctuation ("I tongue the barrel into my cheek and say, Tyler, you're thinking of vampires."). This distinction overtly marks the separation between Tyler and the Narrator by making it unclear whether the words are spoken aloud or whether the dialogue is internal. Furthermore, the lack of quotation marks for the Narrator's speech without other markers of indirect speech unifies the Narrator's words and his subjective thoughts. By extension, this seems to put Tyler 'outside' of the Narrator's internal space. Conversely, it also seems to imply that the narrator is aware of the conflation of the two personalities, and that there is someone from whom this fact needs to be concealed. Currie might argue that in this case, the implied author (through the voice of the narrator) seeks to fool the reader. This argument is not helpful within the fictional world. The tacit implication of a deception points to a fictional world recipient of this narrative. It therefore puts the internal subjective experience of the Narrator in opposition to the objective consensus reality of the fictional world,

[153] Currie, "Unreliability Refigured," 22.

making the narration unreliable with respect to the fictional world and not only on the level of the text and reader. Because of the extreme unreliability, the Narrator's experience indirectly becomes secondary to the experiences corroborated by other characters.

A pivotal factor in this process of the Narrator's narrativisation of reality is narrative delirium. In the context of a fictional world, it can be said, with Lars Bernaerts, that

> The delusional world of the mad subject is textually presented as an alternative possible world […]. Through an act of (over)interpretation the alternative world is linked to the textual actual world. The mad subject processes impressions from reality in a markedly different way, but he is convinced that his delirium represents the real, actual world.[154]

The narration therefore is decentered not only by unreliability (both intentional and unintentional), but also by delirium which brings them all together within the Narrator's subjectivity, resulting in an unreliable narrative delirium. Bernaerts says of narrative delirium that "the reader, guided by narrative and rhetorical strategies, is ushered into the delusional world of the mad character in much the same way as he is immersed in the fictional world. At the point where the delirium is introduced, a fictional, imaginative recentering takes place"; "in other words, the delirium is not only a reaction to reality. It also alters reality, in the sense that the mad character is led by his alternative view in the interaction with characters who exist in the textual actual world."[155] Bernaerts argues here that in narrative delirium, the experience of delirium constitutes the elements of the narrator's own reality, which is at a distance from the reality of the fictional world. A similar effect can be seen in Dennis Lehane's novel *Shutter Island,* in which Teddy Daniels believes that he is investigating the case of an escaped mental patient.[156] As the novel progresses, Teddy is told that he is himself a patient of the institution rather than a U.S. Marshal. The novel never clearly resolves which story is the 'true' reality of the fictional world. In *Shutter Island*, the details of the narrative delirium becomes the reason and the logic behind Teddy's behaviour. In order to see the other side in which Teddy is a mental patient, a recentering of reality needs to occur in order for

---

[154] Lars Bernaerts, "Fight Club and the Embedding of Delirium in Narrative," Style 43, no. 3 (Fall 2009): 377. Bernaerts is using different terms that I. By "the textual actual world," he means the fictional world as it is experienced non-subjectively and as it is described by the text. By "real, actual world," he is again referring to what I am calling the fictional world.

[155] Bernaerts, "Fight Club and the Embedding of Delirium in Narrative," 377.

[156] Dennis Lehane, *Shutter Island* (New York: Harper Collins, 2003).

the narrative to cope with an alternative response. As in *Fight Club*, the reality of the narrative is recentered away from the objective reality of the fictional world.

The narrative delirium of *Fight Club*, combined with the Narrator's unreliability, thus generates two realities. The first is the internal narrativised experiences of the Narrator, and the second is the non-narrativised states of affairs and reality conditions of the fictional world. The Narrator's delirium, combined with the persistent misrepresentation of the fictional world (unreliability) results in the Narrator presenting his listener with a simulacrum-like account of events. However, this formulated and curated relationship to the fictional world which the Narrator presents is alternately reinforced and fractured by the conflict between his subjectivity and his ability to interact with the fictional world. The Narrator's insomnia and dissociation leads to increasingly regular blackouts, during which Tyler spends more and more time directly interacting with the fictional world. This in turn forces the Narrator deeper into his delirium and forces him to renegotiate his experience of the fictional world to suit the recentered reality of his delirium. The Narrator's experience is a juxtaposition of simulacrum and hyperreal, a "mode[l] of a real without origins or reality […] the real is produced from miniaturized units, from matrices, memory banks and command models – and with these it can be reproduced an infinite number of times."[157] The Narrator constitutes his simulacral narrative from isolated elements of the fictional world which are then produced and reproduced until the experience of the real becomes as subject to narrativisation as the simulacrum. "Tyler asked me to type up the fight club rules and make him ten copies. […] The paparazzi flash of the copy machine in my face. The insomnia distance of everything, a copy of a copy of a copy. You can't touch anything, and nothing can touch you."[158] In this excerpt, the Narrator seems unaware of the conflation of himself and Tyler, his awareness buried in the disassociating "insomnia distance" of his own experience. The reality of the fictional world is broken down into discrete decontextualized experiences, like a paparazzi photograph.[159] These can then

[157] Jean Baudrillard, "Simulacra and Simulations," in *Jean Baudrillard, Selected Writings*, edited by Mark Poster, translated by Jacques Mourrain (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988), 166.
[158] Palahniuk, *Fight Club*, 96-97.
[159] A significant proportion of scholarship on *Fight Club* relates to ideas of masculinity, consumerism, and body politics. The "paparazzi flash of the copy machine" has been cited to designate a perception of a vacuous celebrity culture. This scene also appears in the film *Fight Club* which is discussed in the next section. The actor Edward Norton's presence in the film can be said to capitalise on his career which involves portraying other Angry White Males, such as Derek Vinyard, a violent skinhead in Tony Kaye's *American History X* (1998). Masculinity and male embodiment is argued in various places, including:
Kevin Alexander Boon, "Men and Nostalgia for Violence: Culture and Culpability in Chuck Palahniuk's *Fight Club*," *The Journal of Men's Studies* 11, no. 3 (2003): 267-276.
Henry A. Giroux, "Brutalised Bodies and Emasculated Politics: *Fight Club*, Consumerism, and Masculine Violence," *Third Text* 14, no. 53 (2000): 31-41.

be copied and taken out of their relative contexts until the real becomes secondary to the experience of disassociation: "You can't touch anything, and nothing can touch you." The narrator therefore seems to undergo an increasingly repetitive process of experiencing reality in discrete units between blackouts, decontextualizing these experiences, repeating them as a constitutive element of his own self-narration of the reality of the fictional world, and then couching his narration in a layer of unreliability which completes the representative simulacrum.

At the conclusion of the novel, the Narrator is fully aware of his and Tyler's unity. He seems aware of the simulacrum he has constructed in the process of his narration, which both knowingly and unknowingly misrepresents the facts of the fictional world. He seems equally aware of the damage that his hyperreal experiences have done to the simulacrum that he believed in. As these contradictive experiences come together, the Narrator seems to experience the real, the hyperreal, and the simulacrum all together. After Tyler threatens to kill Marla, the Narrator shoots himself in the mouth with the goal of ridding himself of Tyler:

> Of course, when I pulled the trigger, I died.
>
> Liar.
>
> And Tyler died.
>
> With the police helicopters thundering toward us, and Marla and all the support group people who couldn't save themselves, with all of them trying to save me, I had to pull the trigger.[160]

This moves through each of the above described barriers to the reality of the fictional world, but also emphasises access to a corroborating perspective. The phrase "of course" in the first line creates the appearance of authenticity and authority, which is then undermined by "liar." This is another occasion of what Currie refers to as complex intention, where the narrator "intends that superficial evidence will suggest that her intention was X, whereas a better, more reflective grasp

---

Henry A. Giroux, "Private Satisfactions and Public Disorders: *Fight Club*, Patriarchy, and the Politics of Masculine Violence," *JAC* 21, no. 1 (Winter 2001): 1-31.
Asbjørn Grønstad, "One-Dimensional Men: *Fight Club* and the Poetics of the Body," *Film Criticism* 28, no. 1 (Fall 2003): 1-23.
Melissa Iocco, "Addicted to Affliction: Masculinity and Perversity in *Crash* and *Fight Club*," *Gothic Studies* 9, no. 1 (May 2007): 46-56.
Claire Sisco King, "It Cuts Both Ways: *Fight Club*, Masculinity, and Abject Hegemony," *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies* 6, no. 4 (2009): 366-385.
[160] Palahniuk, *Fight Club*, 206.

of the evidence will suggest that her intention was Y."[161] The Narrator therefore seems to be deliberately misrepresenting the fictional world in stating that "Of course, when I pulled the trigger, I died." There is also a fluid and indeterminate use of pronouns, which is also reflective of unreliability. There is initially a clear distinction between "I" and "Tyler," but in the fourth line, it becomes increasingly unclear who is a member of "us." The "us" could be the Narrator, Marla, and all of the members of the support group who sought to help him. Conversely, it could be a unity of the Narrator and Tyler, as the repetition of "and" ("*and* Marla *and* all the support group people") implies a separation between the units who are designated by "us," and the additional units of Marla and the support group.

The Narrator therefore in part seems to be recounting the logical (simulacral) story that he believed, in which he is only himself and not Tyler. In stating "when I pulled the trigger, I died," the Narrator is recounting a logical sequence of events which is cohesive with his experience of Tyler as a distinct person. He then interrupts himself, creating a fracture in the apparent truthfulness of his experience with "liar," forcing himself to evaluate the veracity of the statement with respect to feedback from the fictional world. He continues to think and experience, he is therefore not dead, despite his simulacrum story necessitating it. The Narrator tries again, with "and Tyler died," which stands uncorrected. Ultimately, his delirium-oriented reality becomes incompatible with the events of the fictional world which is filled with "police helicopters," "Marla," and "all the support group people" who saw the Narrator performing all of Tyler's actions. Faced with this overwhelming assemblage of reality confirmation, the Narrator "had to pull the trigger."

As the Narrator awakens after his self-inflicted injury, he believes that he has died and is in Heaven: "the angels here are the Old Testament kind, legions and lieutenants, a heavenly host who works in shifts, days, swing. Graveyard. They bring you your meals on a tray with a paper cup of meds. The Valley of the Dolls playset.[162] After the fracture and partial collapse of the Narrator's

---

[161] Currie, "Unreliability Refigured," 22.

[162] Palahniuk, *Fight Club*, 207.
"The Valley of the Dolls" denotes that it is possible that the Narrator has seen the film *Valley of the Dolls* (Robson 1967), which resonates with the Narrator's experiences of self-medication, self-harm, and rock bottom. As will be discussed in Chapter Two on genre. Intertextuality and adaptation, external references in texts do not rupture the division between fictional and actual worlds. Instead, it hints that the history of the fictional world might have a similar film titled *Valley of the Dolls.* This line also obliquely refers to the concept of "uncanny valley," where the gap between the real and the simulation is wide enough for the difference between subjects to be noted, but close enough for it to be eerie. This is based loosely in the ideas of the uncanny, taken from Sigmund Freud. Chapter Four deals with ideas of the uncanny with reference to the film *The Devil's Backbone*.
Sigmund Freud, "The Uncanny," in *Fantastic Literature: A Critical Reader*, ed. David Santer (London: Praeger, 2004), 74-101.

simulacral narrativisation of his subjective reality in the gunshot incident, the Narrator's delirium no longer necessitates a recentering of reality. As Bernaerts points out:

> Through the projection of an inner world, the represented world is psychologically motivated and reordered. Depending on the range of the delirium, elements of the textual world will therefore be understood as a representation of the subject's consciousness and his unconscious. Even physical objects, sounds, smells, and other characters may need to be revised by the reader within the context of the embedded narrative engendered by the mad characters' deviant mind.[163]

Narrative delirium relates the subjective experience and the resulting narrativisation of internal reality. In this case, the Narrator's ability to represent his situation in his narration is distinct from his own delirium. This rupture between delirium and narration is evident in his juxtaposition of the supernatural and the real: "the angels here are the Old Testament kind […], a heavenly host who works in shifts, days, swing. Graveyard." He seems to acknowledge that the objective reality is that he is being tended by nurses who typically "wor[k] in shifts, days, swing. Graveyard" while maintaining his own coherent system of reference by referring to them as angels. It is unclear as to whether he does this to continue to accommodate his own delusion which was so damaged by the gunshot incident, or whether he is again demonstrating the complex intention of misrepresenting the fictional world. In either sense, the result is the same in recentering the reality of the narration on the facts of the fictional world. The facts of the fictional world become the given, and the Narrator's delusional subjective reality becomes secondary within the narration.

Throughout the novel, the Narrator's voice becomes increasingly unreliable as his mental health worsens. This shift, while increasingly obfuscating the reality of the fictional world, nevertheless does not succeed in supplanting it. The Narrator's narrativisation of his experience fully conceals the fictional world from the actual world reader, forcing the reader to retroactively alter their understanding of events concerning Tyler Durden to be performed by the Narrator instead. When read within the fictional world, the narration can be shown to be equally complex and deceptive. However, also it becomes clear that the fictional world remains a constituted reality, from which the Narrator must deviate. By evaluating these two realities with respect to each other in the body of the narration, it becomes possible to understand the workings of the fictional world through and in the Narrator's telling rather than despite it. In the following section, I will be looking at the narration of David Fincher's film *Fight Club*, with the goal of evaluating how its narration

[163] Bernaerts, "Fight Club and the Embedding of Delirium in Narrative," 380.

relates to the reality of the fictional world when considering the differing demands of the filmic medium.

Where is my Mind – Fincher's *Fight Club* and Medium-Specificity in Narration and Character

Like Palahniuk's *Fight Club*, the narration of David Fincher's *Fight Club* is unreliable, changeable, and obfuscating; in this section, I will be building on the analysis of unreliability within the fictional world with respect to the narration of the film.[164] Unlike the novel, the film *Fight Club* has a visual representation of characters and events on-screen, radically changing the manner in which this unreliability manifests, as well as its direct effect. Emily R. Anderson argues that unreliable films

> Fall into two broad categories: films that mislead the viewer by underreporting the story, and films that lie to the viewer by misreporting the story. Critics often group these films together – calling them puzzle films or twist movies – but there are crucial differences between films that mislead an audience by encouraging it to draw false conclusions, and films that offer false data and thus demand misinterpretations.[165]

Anderson argues that the arbiter of unreliability is the viewer (or reader). The case of unreliability in film is slightly different from unreliability in literature, since the site of unreliability is extended to include the audio-visual mechanism of film. The viewer is indeed the recipient of many aspects of unreliable narration which are dependent on the actual world text. These include extradiegetic elements of structure (such as prolepsis and analepsis), cast, camera (including movement, angle, focus, composition and framing), staging (including lighting and costuming), extradiegetic sound, and post-production (such as voice-over narration, editing, and special effects). These aspects of film are the most evident forms of narration, and are most often to blame for unreliable narration

[164] Adaptation is discussed in Part One (pages 26-33) and in Chapter Two, with reference to Soderbergh's *Solaris*. Because it is discussed elsewhere, I will not be going into great depth regarding Fincher's *Fight Club* as an adaptation.

[165] Emily R. Anderson, "Telling Stories: Unreliable Discourse, *Fight Club*, and the Cinematic Narrator," *Journal of Narrative Theory* 40, no.1 (Winter 2010): 84.

in film. From a fictional world-centric perspective, it is possible, however, to distinguish the reality of the fictional world and fictional world unreliability from unreliable narration.

Figure 1 – The credits roll over the Narrator's neurons

As Gregory Currie argues with respect to actors and characters, a narrative representation of the fictional world does not equate to facts about the fictional world.[166] This distinction allows for crucial differentiations. The opening sequence of the film, for example, moves through a complex network of neurons and cells as they flash with electric signals, the opening credits appearing on the screen and heavy electronic music playing (figure 1).[167] The camera pulls back, eventually zooming out past the skull and scalp to reveal the Narrator's face with a gun barrel between his teeth. The sequence prominently features computer generated animation for the internal shots of the Narrator's brain, which seems to align the narration with the actual world rather than the fictional one: the computer generated image is shown as a representation of the character and not as the character himself. The music and the cast credits reinforce this affiliation, their extradiegetic presence reinforcing the overtly artificial nature of the sequence. With Currie in mind, however, it is possible to see that this sequence does not posit that there are credits and electronic music inside the Narrator's computer generated brain. Instead, this sequence *represents* the inside of the Narrator's head. This representative relationship allows for the reality of the fictional world to be realised in an actual world text. The separation between representation and fact is the first step in distinguishing film narration from the fictional world and in beginning to understand the fictional world through unreliable narration.

The most immediate access to a film's narration is the medium-specific audio-visual components of the film. In the introduction, as the opening credits end, the camera zooms out of the Narrator's head, eventually revealing the Narrator filling the centre of the screen with a gun barrel between his teeth (figure 2). The audience is not yet aware that this figure is the Narrator – and it is unlikely that they would be able to identify the actor as Edward Norton at this point in the film, given the concealment of half of his face, and the distortion around the eyes resulting from an

[166] Currie, *Image and Mind,* 48, 49.

[167] The piece played is part of the original score for the film titled "Intro Song (Stealing Fat)" by The Dust Brothers. The title of the song is metatextual, referring to Tyler's illegal theft of human fat from a plastic surgery clinic later in the film. Tyler uses this fat to make soap; this soap also features on the posters for the promotion of the theatrical release of the film. This is an example of how narrative elements of the film reinforce ties to the actual world through metatextual referencing, and institutional factors such as marketing.

expression of terror, as well as swelling and bruising.[168] The indeterminacy of the shot is exacerbated by a dark blue tone which reduces its contrast, making details appear less sharp.[169] A voice-over states that "people are always asking me if I know Tyler Durden." Another voice, this one diegetic, says "three minutes. This is it. Ground zero. Would you like to say a few words to mark the occasion?" The camera rotates and moves back, showing the Narrator in profile and a hand holding the gun (figure 3). The Narrator mumbles around the gun, and the voice over informs the audience that "with a gun barrel between your teeth, you speak only in vowels." The gun is removed, and for the first time, the on-screen Narrator speaks, saying "I can't think of anything." The camera moves back behind Tyler, clearly showing his body in front of the narrator (figure 4). This sequence establishes four levels of narrative experience, each of which is authenticated with relation to the camera and the viewer's response to it.

Figure 2 – The Narrator looks past the gun barrel

Figure 3 – Tyler holds the Narrator at gunpoint

Figure 4 – Tyler obscures the Narrator

[168] At the time of filming *Fight Club*, Edward Norton already played many feature roles including Aaron, a murderer with a split personality in Gregory Hoblit's *Primal Fear* (1996), and the untrustworthy "Worm" in *Rounders* (Dahl 1998), in addition to Derek Vineyard from *American History X* (see footnote 159 on page 53). Although his previous roles have no relevance to the configuration of the fictional character, Norton's casting history could further influence the viewer's perception of the Narrator's inherent untrustworthiness as a point of access into the fictional world.

[169] I have increased the brightness in figures 1 - 5 in order to make their content more clear.

The first form of narration the viewer is presented with is that of the filmic mechanism. The audience uses this level of narration as the point of authority against which other forms of narration are authenticated.[170] As Robert Burgoyne argues,

> In creating the fictional world, the impersonal narrator produces a type of discourse that is read directly as the facts of the 'real world' of the fictional universe. The impersonal narrator's lack of human personality allows the viewer to imagine that he or she is confronting the fictional universe directly, putting aside any reflection on the form of the narrative discourse.[171]

The impersonal direct narration of film therefore also creates the impression of objectivity and truthfulness, "putting aside any reflection" on the camera as a form of narration altogether. Burgoyne goes on to state that:

> Because the narrator produces the discourse through which the viewer reconstructs the fictional world, this discourse comprises the facts of the fictional universe, which always carry the value of authenticity. Consequently, the discourse of the impersonal narrator in film is always reliable in the most basic sense: this type of narrator cannot lie about the fictional world, although the narrator can withhold information and cause the spectator to make incorrect inferences.[172]

The viewer therefore believes that the camera is 'telling' the truth about the facts of the fictional world, imbuing the camera with the authenticating authority of the fictional world. Burgoyne posits here that the impersonal narrator of film "cannot lie about the fictional world," which will prove to be false with respect to *Fight Club*, since the film clearly shows Tyler as a distinct character from the Narrator.[173] Nonetheless, the audience does not yet have cause to doubt this level of narration, and so the camera is allowed to create a primary barrier between the critical reader and the reality

---

[170] The camera as a false authenticating authority can be seen in the film *Horse Girl* (Baena 2020), in which the camera shows Sarah's subjective experiences as her lucid dreams start to leak into her daily life. Unlike *Fight Club*, *Horse Girl* does not show an alternative to the unreliable camera, leaving the viewer unsure whether to trust the authority of the film, or to accept a lack of resolution for the events of the fictional world.

[171] Robert Burgoyne, "The Cinematic Narrator: The Logic and Pragmatics of Impersonal Narration," *Journal of Film and Video* 42, no. 1 (Spring 1990): 7.

[172] Robert Burgoyne, "The Cinematic Narrator: The Logic and Pragmatics of Impersonal Narration," *Journal of Film and Video* 42, no. 1 (Spring 1990): 7.

[173] Ron Howard's *A Beautiful Mind* (2001) also uses a subjective focalisation on the character of John Nash to show manifestations of his delusions. The film shows the figments of Nash's schizophrenia as if they were real, not questioning their existence until his wife tells him otherwise.

of the fictional world. The film's narration is therefore able to act as an authenticating authority for the subsequent levels of narration.

The next narrative level introduced is that of the voice-over. The voice-over provides the audience with an identifiable source of narration, the indirect filmic narrator being dismissed in its apparent mimesis. With reference to Marie-Laure Ryan's theory of impersonal narration, Cornelia Klecker argues that "the central notion of this model is that the impersonal narration has two functions: it creates the fictional universe, and it can also refer to, select, and comment on it. The world-creating function combined with the impersonal narration's lack of human characteristics makes the viewer believe in its factuality."[174] When juxtaposed with the "world-creating function" and "lack of human characteristics" of the impersonal narration of film, the first-person subjective voice-over narration seems even less authoritative. Klecker goes on to argue that

> The extradiegetic narrative instance […] delivers the film's pictures and sounds; its truthfulness is taken for granted by the viewers. If other narrative agents – character-narrators – contradict the fictional world created, viewers will automatically consider them false and unreliable. The character—narrator does not possess automatic authentication authority but must first be authenticated.[175]

The narration by the voice-over is allowed to redirect any suspicion the audience might have over the veracity of the filmic narration as the film goes on, playing on the sort of subjective internalisation seen in the above section on Palahniuk's *Fight Club*. It remains to be authenticated by the extradiegetic narrative instance (the cinematic medium), and so its narrative authority is subject to any discrepancies which might appear between the impersonal narration of film and states of affairs which take place. It therefore takes on any unreliable responsibility because of its subjective first person ("asking me if *I* know Tyler Durden"). Tim Burton's *Big Fish* (2003) utilises a similar narrative effect, where the camera clearly shows the father's fantastical experiences as a young man. The way in which the camera fails to clearly distinguish between the wondrous and the real foists the responsibility for unreliability onto the father's extravagant storytelling style.

Next, the reader is introduced to Tyler Durden, who appears both as a diegetic voice and in physical form as a hand holding the gun (figure 3) and as a full body standing between the Narrator and the camera (figure 4). The viewer does not need to believe that Tyler is not real,

---

[174] Cornelia Klecker, "Authentication Authority and Narrative Self-Erasure in *Fight Club,*" *American Studies* 59, no. 1 (2014): 85. Referring to
Marie-Laure Ryan, "The Pragmatics of Personal and Impersonal Fiction," *Poetics* 10 (1981): 517-539.
[175] Klecker, "Authentication Authority and Narrative Self-Erasure in *Fight Club*," 85

because he is presented by the film mechanism, which seems more reliable than the first person narrator alternative. Anderson argues that the film is

> Misreporting diegetic events […] by adhering to cinematic conventions for storytelling while presenting Tyler as though he exists. A viewer is not inclined to doubt his existence any more than Jack's or Marla's. Indeed the viewer does not doubt it, not only because there is no reason to – there is nothing that needs explaining, but because there is direct evidence that he does exist. We see him walking around, talking to people, and punching them in the face.[176]

The authority of the camera and the viewer's complicity in its authentication confirms Tyler as an independent character, going so far as to introduce Tyler as an authority before the Narrator; Tyler's voice is the first diegetic sound, speaking with awareness of events that are going to take place: "three minutes. That's it." Tyler has physical superiority with respect to the Narrator, controlling the space of the room with the threat of the gun, and physically looming over the Narrator while directly restricting with the camera's ability to see him fully (figure 4). When the camera finally pulls away to show the two men completely, Tyler remains in control (figure 5). His body dominates half of the frame, his outstretched arm enabling a casually authoritative posture and increasing his physical area, while the Narrator remains a tiny figure in the other half of the frame. The overlay of the city mostly obscures the Narrator's figure, while its upright lines accentuate Tyler's posture. Even his face is concealed, preserving his control of the scene and the mysterious authority of his character while the Narrator's was forfeit by the camera intruding in the very substance of his brain in the introductory sequence.[177] With Tyler's overt control of the scene, coupled with the vetting of the camera, the audience can attribute him with more authority than the as-yet unidentified man in the chair. In

Figure 5 – Tyler maintains control

[176] Anderson, "Telling Stories," 92.

[177] Brad Pitt's hidden face has an opposing effect to Norton's immediate reveal (see page 58, footnote 168). Pitt's rebellious allure after his work in *The Dark Side of the Sun* (Nikolić 1988), *Legends of the Fall* (Zwick 1994) and *Seven Years in Tibet* (Annaud 1997) is tempered with his much darker personas from *Interview with the Vampire* (Jordan 1994), *Se7en* (Fincher 1995), *12 Monkeys* (Gilliam 1995), and *Meet Joe Black* (Brest 1998). Norton's experience playing the Angry White Male (in two cases, a murderer) is complemented by Pitt's dark roles (a vampire, a wrathful detective, a mental patient, and the devil) which are characterised by turmoil and moral ambiguity. By concealing his face, the cinematic narrator allows Tyler Durden to build his own dark authority and allure, which can then be drastically compounded by Pitt's full reveal later in the film, inflected by his previous roles. Both Norton's and Pitt's star power feature prominently in the film's marketing, although Tyler is usually more prominent than the Narrator, reflecting their narrative roles.

addition, at times the camera occupies Tyler's point of view, authenticating Tyler's perspective by equating it (and the viewer) with the authoritative impersonal narration of the film.

Finally, the Narrator enters as a character. As he speaks his first lines, it becomes evident that the Narrator's voice is that of the voice-over. This affiliation links the Narrator as a real individual within the fictional world with the lack of authentication and implied unreliability of the voice-over. The voice-over has some implicit authority through the act of narration, which "indicat[es] that the enunciator has given him the authority to relate the story."[178] However, as explored above, any potential unreliability directly undermines this authority. This is in part exacerbated by Tyler's clear control and the Narrator's established subjective perspective. In *Fight Club*, unreliability is therefore embedded into the medium itself, which acts as an authentication authority for subsequent subjective and misrepresenting or misreporting perspectives of the fictional world reality. Any aspects which can be verified by a consensus reality as belonging to the fictional world – such as the actions of the narrator – are mediated and undermined by Tyler's very real presence, and the default authority of the film narrative, which is in turn given authority by its mimetic qualities. It is therefore problematic to use the film's narration to make direct statements about the reality of the fictional world, since they are fundamentally authenticated by their relationship to the actual world via the text rather than the reality conditions and states of affairs within the fictional world.

Despite the hierarchy of authentication which enables a distancing of the representation of the narration and the fictional world, the fictional world can still act as a superior authentication authority.[179] At the end of the film, the audience is shown the discrepancy between the represented and the real fictional world when the Narrator is trying to disrupt Tyler's destructive plans. Tyler forcibly stops the Narrator from interfering with the blasting gel, starting a fight which brings the

Figure 6 – Tyler throws the Narrator down the stairs

Figure 7 – Our first glimpse of the fictional world

[178] Klecker, "Authentication Authority and Narrative Self-Erasure in *Fight Club*," 86.
[179] In Zack Snyder's *Sucker Punch* (2011), two realities are shown with equal authority by the camera: that of Babydoll's traumatic experiences in a mental asylum, and that of her fantastical imagination where she is a powerful fighter who plans her escape. The camera does not give one narrative authority over the other, so the coherence of events and reality conditions in the mental asylum serve to identify the alternate narrative as unreal.

two men through the building. The fight is shown directly by the camera (figure 6) and also indirectly, as the camera looks at a security video screen (figure 7). The direct footage shows Tyler assaulting the Narrator, while the security footage clearly shows the Narrator beating himself and throwing himself down stairs. This is the culmination of a series of 'revised' clips in which the Narrator replaces Tyler in scenes which have already happened. Temporarily, the viewer is being given visual access to a non-subjective representation of the fictional world. Klecker refers to the 'removal' of Tyler from *Fight Club* as self-erasure, a "position between fictional existence and non-existence" in which viewers are complicit "with the text when it comes to constructing fictional objects and worlds."[180] Conversely, I would argue that rather than self-erasure, Tyler's removal from these scenes creates a representational point in which the viewer can visually imagine the reality of the fictional world. Tyler is not 'erased' from the fictional world, since he was never an individual part of the fictional world. To return to Margolin's views on character (Part One, page 23), an individual "can be uniquely identified, located in a space/time region, and endowed with a variety of physical and mental attributes and relations."[181] Textually speaking, this is the case with Tyler. Based on the information given by the film, he can be identified distinctly from the Narrator, largely due to the noticeable distinction between Brad Pitt and Edward Norton as representative individuals. According to the film's visuals, Tyler occupies a distinct space and time (see the discussion of figures 4 and 5). He also is endowed with physical attributes (again, note his physical dissimilarity from Norton) and mental attributes (he formulates plans that the Narrator is not aware of). According to the text and the narration, Tyler is a full individual character.

This conclusion as to Tyler's status as a real character changes, however, when viewed from within the fictional world. To other characters in the fictional world, Tyler looks like the Narrator. In the sequence of revised flashbacks, for example, the Narrator is shown hosting the underground fight club, whereas in the initial narration, the Narrator is in the shadows, watching Tyler do the introductions. The men present at these fight clubs would have seen the Narrator perform these speeches, unaware that Tyler's personality is dominant. In the same way, Tyler does not occupy his own space and time. Finally, as in the previous two requirements, Tyler does not have his own physical attributes, although he does have his own mental attributes; he makes plans while the Narrator personality is blacked out. However, having failed the other two (and a half) attributes, Tyler is not an individual within the fictional world. He is, as Margolin refers to characters, *non-*

[180] Klecker, "Authentication Authority and Narrative Self-Erasure in *Fight Club*," 91.
[181] Margolin, "Individuals in Narrative Worlds," 844.

actualised, meaning that while he has a narrative role, he does not exist as a constituent of any reality.[182]

The collapse of the authentication hierarchy begins at the bottom – by the Narrator's character learning the truth when other characters call him Tyler. The failure moves up the ranks of authority as Tyler acknowledges the union between the two men, and then the subjective voice-over works through it. Finally, the film narration reveals its unreliability, forfeiting its authority and destroying the authentication hierarchy altogether. From an actual world perspective, this collapse in authentication spurs a circular reading, or an imaginative retrospective in which the 'new' information can be used to modify the 'old' narrative to more appropriately represent the fictional world.[183] From a fictional world perspective, however, no review or revision is required, as it remains unchanged. The narration deceives the reader through misrepresentation and misreporting, but it has no sway over the reality of the fictional world. In the final scene of the film, the Narrator and Marla, holding hands, look out over the collapsing capitalist infrastructure. The camera, having recorded the process of the Narrator purging Tyler from his mind, once again seems objective and trustworthy. It no longer shows Tyler, and even avoids taking on the point of view of any characters, limiting its apparent subjectivity. And yet, as the buildings collapse and the viewer sees the Narrator and Marla turn to each other, the strains of "Where is my Mind" by Pixies floods the soundscape.[184] The music is extradiegetic and smothers the sounds of the massive explosions occurring beyond the window. As the credits start to roll, an image of a penis flashes across the screen, referring to Tyler Durden's pastime of splicing pornography into family films. With these last moments, the narration emphasises its inherent separation from the fictional world (through

---

[182] Margolin, "Individuals in Narrative Worlds," 844.

[183] Christina Wald, "Second Selves, Second Stories: Unreliable Narration and the Circularity of Reading in Ford Madox Ford's *The Good Soldier* and Chuck Palahniuk's / David Findcher's *Fight Club*," *Symbolism: An International Annual of Critical Aesthetics* 9 (2010): 217-241.

[184] Released in 1988, "Where is My Mind?" from the album *Surfer Rosa* is one of the signature songs of the band Pixies. Pixies were seminal in the grunge movement of the late 1980s and 1990s and influenced such grunge mega-bands as Radiohead and Nirvana. Mark Bedford argues that the use of a 1990s grunge aesthetic has a "dazzling" effect, which trades heavily on the social and political aura of grunge stars like Kurt Cobain. Beaumont argues that like "the classless grunge melting pot, *Fight Club* is similarly uninterested in class alignment," and that the aesthetics of designer grunge contribute to the film's incredible popularity. These elements are tied to the actual world intertextual resonances of the text, and here demonstrates the authority that the film's narration has with respect to the actual world in opposition to its lack of authority with respect to the fictional one.
Pixies, "Where is My Mind?," *Surfer Rosa* (4AD, 1988).
Mark Bedford, "Smells Like 1990s Spirit: the Dazzling Deception of *Fight Club's* Grunge-Aesthetic," *New Cinemas: Journal of Contemporary Film* 9, no. 1 (2011): 55-56.
Mark Beaumont, "Inside the Cult of Pixies: Why They're More than Just a Band," *NME*, September 2016, accessed May 17, 2018. nme.com/features/inside-the-cult-of-pixies-why-theyre-not-just-a-band-797394.

the extradiegetic soundtrack) and the continued unreliable subjectivity through its reference to Tyler Durden's continuing presence. The film's supposedly impersonal narration therefore fails to regain its authenticating authority, leaving the viewer adrift, in search of the authentication of the fictional world.

Both *Fight Clubs* are therefore texts which feature highly unreliable narration. While it may at first seem that unreliable narration imposes a barrier for the reader between them and the fictional world, it can also recenter it in the critical perspective. Once a reader or viewer is aware that the narration they are receiving is unreliable, it becomes easier to see the reality of the fictional world; by undermining the illusion of narrative authority, unreliability encourages a deeper look into the fictional world, encouraging reader and viewer to look for the facts, and not the representation. In both cases, the fictional world is made accessible through characters. Whether they are fully realised individuals – like the subjective narrator whose unreliability encourages a subversive reading of the narration – or whether they fall apart as cohesive individuals under scrutiny – like Tyler Durden – characters and the ways in which they exist as part of the consensus reality help to centralise the fictional world in a critical perspective.

Chapter Two: *Solaris* in Triplicate - the Alien, the Art Object, and the Remake

In Chapter One, I examined the properties of fictional world, exploring their boundaries as they are established by constructed narrative, as well as the access which is granted through fictional characters. In this chapter, I will look at the contextual knowledge which forms a pillar of critical theoretical responses to fiction in film and literature. *Solaris* is a 1961 novel by Polish author Stanisław Lem, a masterpiece of science fiction which influenced the genre for decades. The novel was adapted into a 1972 Russian film by Andrei Tarkovsky, lauded as a landmark example of Cold War art cinema. The most recent *Solaris* is the 2002 film by Steven Soderbergh. Coming out of the American independent tradition, Soderbergh's *Solaris* is an exploration of the filmic medium, an experiment in adaptation and intertextuality. This chapter is chronologically structured with three sections, one for each *Solaris.* The analysis is cumulative, starting with genre forms and subversions, moving into authorial, technical and historical contextual readings, and finishing with the question of adaptation and individuation. Each of these texts seem to demand a contextual reading as genre fiction, as political fiction, and as part of an intertextual network. As such, they pose a potential challenge for my proposed methodology of reading fictional worlds. These texts are also potentially problematic because they challenge the idea of fictional worlds as the world of the character. In each *Solaris*, the characters struggle to come to terms with the incomprehensible alien, and in many respects, they utterly fail. The *Solaris*-es therefore provide a more nuanced view of the fictional world as a reality in which characters exist and as a reality that functions around the characters. Although I will be dealing closely with concepts from genre theory, Cold War studies, and adaptation theory, my intention is not to cover the critical field of these areas of research. Instead, I will be using these concepts as they define and structure our actual world responses as a critical point of departure. Doing so will help to identify how existing critical perspectives may (or may not) be productive in a fictional world-centric approach.

Solaris: 1961 – Let's Talk About the Alien

Stanisław Lem's *Solaris*[185] is a cult classic novel which explores the place of humans within the larger universe, asking large and important questions about what constitutes humanity and whether contact with the alien is possible or even desirable. These questions have been thoroughly and eloquently explored by scholars in a variety of disciplines, especially by those specialising in science fiction. For my critical reading of Lem's *Solaris*, however, I will be looking specifically at the generic tendencies of science fiction, and in particular how these tendencies manifest themselves through genre-specific language. I have chosen science fiction language in *Solaris* because it is potentially problematic for a fictional-world centric reading. Not only are genre studies necessarily centred in the actual world (see Part One, pages 25 and 26), but in *Solaris*, the use of language as a science fiction hallmark is undermined by its inefficacy in properly conveying the experiences and realities of the scientists Kelvin and Snow in an internally coherent fictional world. When confronted with the utterly alien, Kelvin and Snow attempt to rationalise its presence by deploying referential linguistic systems within the fictional world which are traditionally reserved for actual world genre theory.

When discussing genre, it has been historically difficult to describe and circumscribe precisely what generic hallmarks are, and what they look (or sound) like. The genre of science fiction, however, is arguably among the easiest genres to identify.[186] When asked what constitutes science fiction, most people will identify space ships, aliens, non-terrestrial planets, interstellar travel, spectacular technology, and a futuristic setting. Other less formal identifying categories, like

---

[185] In this chapter, I will be referring to the two central characters by the name most commonly used in the narration. For Lem's novel, this is Kelvin and Harey, then Kris and Hari for the analysis of Tarkovsky's *Solaris*, and finally Chris and Rheya with respect to Soderbergh's film. Kelvin's wife is named Harey in the original Polish novel, but has been changed to Rheya (an anagram of Harey) in the Kilmartin and Cox translation and in Soderbergh's film. I will be using Harey here to help distinguish the visitor in the discussion of Lem's novel from that of the two films. According to Bill Johnston, the first English translator of the novel, Polish women's names traditionally end in '-a,' meaning that 'Harey' seems exotic in a Polish context. By changing her name to Rheya in the English edition, the distancing effect of 'Harey' is mediated, making it more palatable for Anglophone readership.
Alison Flood, "First Ever Direct English Translation of Solaris Published," *The Guardian,* 15 June, 2011, accessed February 1, 2017, https://www.theguardian.com/books/2011/jun/15/first-direct-translation-solaris.

[186] In this chapter, I will be using the term "science fiction." I have chosen not to use other naming methods for the genre under discussion, because "science fiction" coincides with the particular avenues of discussion I will be taking in this chapter, as well as being the term consistently used to discuss this genre in academic parlance throughout the decades in question. Other terms are often used to refer to science fiction, including "speculative fiction," "scientifiction" (now archaic), "sci-fi," and "SF."

a utopian or dystopian outlook, tend to be culturally significant within the genre during certain eras. Spatially and referentially, science fiction is a genre at the most distant remove from the actual world.[187] At first glance, this fact would seem to make it easier to take a fictional world-centric approach, taking advantage of the significant gap between the fictional and actual world. However, Marie-Laure Ryan's principle of minimal departure (Part One, pages 19 and 20) complicates this assumption: "we [the reader] reconstrue the world of a fiction […] as being the closest possible to the reality we know. This means that we will project upon the world of the statement everything we know about the real world, and that we will make only those adjustments which we cannot avoid."[188] As such, no matter how great the logical or cognitive distance is between the actual world and the fictional world in a work of science fiction, linkages and bridges between the two worlds form the basis for our understanding of the narrative from our own unique point of view. The process of forming relational links to the actual world therefore form the basis of science fiction genre theory.

In his book *Metamorphoses of Science Fiction*, Darko Suvin explores science fiction as a genre, and proposes that is it a "literary genre whose necessary and sufficient conditions are the presence and interaction of estrangement and cognition, and whose main formal device is an imaginative framework alternative to the author's empirical environment."[189] Suvin proposes that an estranged fiction is a fiction in which "an endeavor is made to illuminate such [actual world relations] by creating a radically or significantly different formal framework – a different space/time location or central figures for the fable, unverifiable by common sense."[190] He associates estrangement (the differences between the fictional and actual worlds) with innovation and cognition (science), which is required in order to make the logical connections between the fiction and the scientific premise for which the genre is named.[191] Finally, he points out that the formal device of science fiction is "an imaginative framework alternative to the author's empirical environment."[192] Suvin refers to the "author's empirical environment" as the 'zero world,' which is a set "of empirically verifiable properties around the author (this being 'zero' in the sense of a

---

[187] Suvin, *Metamorphoses of Science Fiction*, 243-269.
The dystopian trend is common in contemporary American science and speculative fiction, including films such as Neill Blomkamp's *Elysium* (2013), which features most surviving terrestrial humans living in slums, and Bong Joon-ho's *Snowpiercer* (2013), a film in which the world has fallen into a nuclear winter and the only surviving humans are trapped on a train.
[188] Ryan, "Fiction, Non-Factuals, and the Principle of Minimal Departure," 406.
[189] Suvin, *Metamorphoses of Science Fiction,* 7-8. Original emphasis.
[190] Suvin, *Metamorphoses of Science Fiction,* 18.
[191] Suvin, *Metamorphoses of Science Fiction*, 13.
[192] Suvin, *Metamorphoses of Science Fiction,* 7-8

central reference point in a coordinate system, or of the control group in an experiment)."[193] 'Zero world' refers to the actual world as it exists for the author. Like all types of fiction, science fiction necessitates a departure from the reality conditions ("empirical environment") of the actual world. He also emphasises that science fiction is non-naturalistic and estranged, but at the same time "SF shares with naturalistic literature, naturalistic science, and naturalistic or materialist philosophy in common sophisticated, dialectical, and cognitive *episteme,*" meaning a scientific cognitive approach.[194] Other scholars have a broader opinion of what science fiction might mean: Judith Merril proposes that science fiction falls under the term 'speculative fiction' which "makes use of the traditional 'scientific method' to examine some postulated approximation of reality."[195] Her categorisation of science fiction is oriented more towards the reader's perception ("approximation of reality") and cognitive attitude ("speculative") than toward the content or tendency of the narrative.[196] This position has an oblique relationship to Suvin's: it links the scientific with the cognitive position of the reader, and puts these in a correlative relationship to the "imaginative framework alternative to the author's empirical environment." Unlike Suvin, Merril proposes that the speculative manner of thinking in combination with a scientific mode is more fundamental to science fiction than the formal and narrative elements themselves.

Rosemary Jackson and Christine Cornea, following Tzvetan Todorov, see science fiction as a mode of the fantastic (Todorov's theory of the fantastic will be discussed in more depth in Chapter Three). In this tradition, they see science fiction as a median genre, midway between fantasy (meaning the marvellous, or elements which are not part of the observable actual world) and reality (meaning the mimetic, mirroring the actual world).[197] Their perspective on science fiction as a mediating position between the marvellous and the mimetic depends on an awareness of both poles: the marvellous exists in reaction to information which goes against mimesis, whereas the mimetic is notable as the least adherent to the marvellous possibilities afforded by fictional worlds. Critical analysis of the science fiction genre, exemplified by the above positions, therefore puts pressure on the dichotomies of actual world representation in fiction: dichotomies like naturalistic and non-naturalistic, mimetic and non-mimetic, realistic and unrealistic, and estranging and

---

[193] Suvin, *Metamorphoses of Science Fiction*, 11.
[194] Suvin, *Metamorphoses of Science Fiction,* 20.
[195] Judith Merril, "What do you Mean: Science? Fiction?", in *SF: The Other Side of Realism*, ed. Thomas D. Clareson (Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1971), 53-95.
Quoted in Cornea, Christine. *Science Fiction Cinema: Between Fantasy and Reality*. (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, Ltd., 2007), 2.
[196] Christine Cornea, *Science Fiction Cinema*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, Ltd., 2007), 2.
[197] Cornea, *Science Fiction Cinema,* 4.

familiar. These approaches are useful in the context of this study, enforcing a distinction between the actual and fictional world by using the conventions of science fiction to act as a wedge (of cognitive estrangement, speculation, or marvellous thinking) between these two realities. However, pressure is unevenly placed upon the fictional aspects of the narrative (those as distanced as possible from the 'zero world') rather than on the way in which these non-naturalistic (non-mimetic, and so on) aspects function within a fictional reality system. The result of this perspective is a closed relational loop in which critical importance is not only dependent on knowledge of a particular actual world context (the 'zero world' of the author) but also subsequently generates critical conclusions which are restricted to those same contexts. The potential of this pressure is therefore limited based on the prior knowledge and creative contributions of the reader to the narrative, and is independent from the fictional world itself. Flipping this pressure by considering how the estranging, non-mimetic, speculative elements function within the reality conditions of the fictional world enables alternative critical readings which are removed from the reflexive loop which positions critical conclusions within the actual world.

The genre of science fiction and effects such as cognitive estrangement, its speculative and marvellous nature, non-mimetic characteristics, and iconography disappear into the fictional world when it is perceived from within. The reality of the fictional world is not bound by generic convention or contextual frameworks. In other words, the narrative, the text, and its intertextual existence may be science fiction, but the fictional world is not because its reality almost always accommodate for what the reader perceives as estranging, speculative, and non-mimetic. This is not to say that the experience of estrangement, or any other associated effects of science fiction, cannot or do not operate within the fictional world. These parallel experiences are related to the fictional world (relocating the zero world to that of the character rather than the text's author) and not to the actual world.[198] From the beginning of Lem's *Solaris*, the reader needs to make increasingly significant modifications to the mimetic distance between the fiction and the actual world. Recalling Suvin's formal dependence on the zero-world of "author's empirical environment" and Ryan's principle of minimal departure, the traditional framework for the reader's cognitive positioning is either the zero-world of the author or the reality conditions of the reader's actual world perceptions.[199] In the first sentences of the novel, the terms "launching bay" and "capsule"

[198] Like the above theories of science fiction, Tzvetan Todorov's theory of the fantastic depends on the experience of the reader to define a genre. Also like the experience of estrangement and alienation in science fiction, the experience of the fantastic can be re-centered on the character within the fictional world. Such relocation of literary and generic effect is explored in relation to *American Gods* in Chapter Three, found on pages 108-110, 114 and 115.

[199] Suvin, *Metamorphoses of Science Fiction,* 7-8

enforce a renegotiation of the reader's understanding of the fictional world to include space travel as commonplace.[200] The experience of these things also seem out of the ordinary for Kelvin: "there was a grinding noise and the capsule swayed. My muscles tensed in spite of myself, but there was no further noise or movement."[201] His anxious response manifests itself as physical tension, demonstrating his discomfort and potential unfamiliarity with space travel. His experience of estrangement seems to mirror the reader's experiences, reinforcing the traditional critical linkages between actual and fictional worlds.

The parallel experience of cognitive estrangement (Suvin) or of the not quite marvellous (Jackson and Cornea) continues over the first four pages of the novel, in which Kelvin describes his vertiginous experiences. The first-person narration of the novel seems to further enhance the connection between protagonist and author by settling the reader into the position of the one who is experiencing. Kelvin's language is sensorial, and evokes a strong mirroring experience in the reader.[202] He employs phrases such as "there was a shrill, grating sound, like a steel blade being drawn across a sheet of wet glass," which inspires auditory imagination in the reader, as well as a cringing physical response.[203] Kelvin describes a brightness which "receded, merging into a vague, purplish glimmer," the "pale reddish glow of infinity," "the coolness from the air-conditioning on my neck, although my face seemed to be on fire," and the vibration which "penetrat[ed] my pneumatic cocoon" and which "ran through my entire body."[204] With first person narration and language rooted in hyper-stimulating sensory experience, the connection between the character's and the reader's experiences seem closer than ever. This is only enhanced with increasingly visceral and personal experiences, such as vertigo:

> The sun's orbit, which had so far encircled me, shifted unexpectedly, and the incandescent disc appeared now to the right, now to the left, seeming to dance on the planet's horizon. I was swinging like a giant pendulum while the planet […] rose up in front of me like a wall.[205]

For the initial four pages of the novel, the fictional world-centric reading offers nothing to distinguish itself from the actual world experience of the reader (or the zero-world of the author),

---

[200] Stanisław Lem, *Solaris,* translated by Joanna Kilmartin and Steve Cox (London: Faber and Faber, 2016): 1.
[201] Lem, *Solaris,* 1.
[202] Vivian Sobchack's book *Carnal Thoughts* is fundamental to this approach.
Vivian Sobchack, *Carnal Thoughts: Embodiment and Moving Image Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004).
[203] Lem, *Solaris*, 2.
[204] Lem, *Solaris*, 2.
[205] Lem, *Solaris*, 3-4.

and rather seems to enhance the alienating effects of science fiction by rooting the reader in Kelvin's first-person embodiment of uncomfortable and intimate sensation.

The alignment of the reader's (actual world) and characters' (fictional world) experience of the fiction breaks down, however, on page five. Despite the spectacular experience of space travel, Kelvin's experience of the Solaris space station is precisely the opposite. The space station, while still new to Kelvin, is well established and even slightly run-down, with a floor "coated with heavy-duty plastic. In places, the wheels of trolleys carrying rockets had worn through this plastic covering to expose the bare steel beneath."[206] As he further enters the station, he sees "open cupboards" which are "filled with instruments, books, dirty glasses, vacuum flasks – all covered with dust."[207] The Solaris station is not only well-established, it is past its prime and unkempt. At this point, there is a breakdown between the reality of the fictional world, Kelvin's experience of the fictional world, and their linkages with the actual world. Within the fictional world, the space station is clearly a well-established presence, although it is still slightly alien to Kelvin's experience despite his previous knowledge of its existence. Despite the first-person narration which seems to tie the reader to Kelvin's cognitive and embodied experience, there is a significant referential gap which requires a reconstruction of the reader's understanding of the fictional world, based on the principle of minimal departure. Not only does the novel present interstellar travel, but there is an accessible space station which is not only comfortably inhabited, but is also in many ways unimportant and neglected.

The fracture between the reality of the fictional world and the actual world only increases as the novel progresses. Ultimately, the cognitive estrangement and near-marvellous experiences of science fiction cease to be associated with Kelvin's perspective on the Solaris station, and are only experienced by the reader. After settling in at the station, Kelvin reveals that "the discovery of Solaris dated from about one hundred years before [he] was born," and there follows an extensive review (eleven pages) of the scientific field of Solaristics.[208] For the reader, these eleven pages serve as an info dump which seems exhaustive, although it is not for Kelvin, who has spent his career studying Solaristics. For Kelvin, the info dump review serves as a reminder that it is the academic field which has been scientifically exhausted: "gradually, in scientific circles, the 'Solaris Affair' came to be regarded as a lost cause, notably among the administrators of the Institute, where voices had recently been raised suggesting that financial support should be withdrawn and research

[206] Lem, *Solaris*, 5.
[207] Lem, *Solaris*, 6.
[208] Lem, *Solaris,*, 15.

suspended."[209] Solaris, the Solaris station, and Solaristics are therefore aspects of the reality of the fictional world. Despite Kelvin's unfamiliarity with space travel and the Solaris station itself, his embodied reactions to the experiences of estrangement and the near-marvellous are related to his lived experience, and not to the fundamental characteristics of these things. Kelvin's familiarity with everything around Solaris clearly predates the frame of the novel, so much so that he uses Solaristics as a touchstone to ground himself in reality:

> in an attempt to pull myself together, I took a chair over to the bookshelves and chose a book familiar to me: the second volume of the early monograph by Hughes and Eugel, *Historia Solaris.*[210]

The estranging conventions so typical in science fiction are not estranging within the fictional world; rather, they are contributing elements to the historical and spatial understanding with which characters frame the reality conditions of their own existence.

Genre in a narrative therefore does not necessarily equate to genre in a fictional world. Most often, as with Kelvin's almost emotional familiarity with the knowledge surrounding Solaris, emblematic elements of science fiction are utterly unremarkable to characters within that world. In Iain M. Banks' Culture novel *Consider Phlebas*, for example, Bora Horza Gobuchel encounters sentient shuttles, interstellar transporters the size of a planet, and the sentient drone Unaha-Closp which is "an Accredited Free Construct, certified sentient under the Free Will Acts by the Greater Vavatch United Moral Standards Administration and with full citizenship of the Vavatch Heterocracy," with an "Incurred Generation Debt," and which "has been accepted for a degree course in applied paratheology."[211] Faced with this impressive being, Horza becomes annoyed with its interruptions and threatens to "blast [its] synthetic fucking brains out."[212] The spectacular technological landscape established in *Consider Phlebas* and other Culture novels is utterly mundane to the characters who inhabit it. They are an established part of the universal reality to the point where Horza looks on these elements with distain, and would rather destroy a technological marvel rather than listen to it. In *Solaris*, the extensive inclusion of Solarist scholarship is alienating to the reader. Although it provides helpful historical and world-building information, it ultimately demonstrates clearly to the reader that the knowledge and experience (and by extension, the reality conditions) of Kelvin and other characters are fundamentally different to ours.

---

[209] Lem, *Solaris*, 24.
[210] Lem, *Solaris,* 15.
[211] Iain M. Banks, *Consider Phlebas* (London: Futura Publications, 1990): 260.
[212] Banks, *Consider Phlebas,* 260.

In contrast, Kelvin reads Solarist textbooks "in an attempt to pull [himself] together."[213] A Solarist scholar in the field of psychology, he is familiar with the hundred-year history of Solaris scholarship, so much so that he finds it helpful in rooting himself back into his concrete reality.

Before Kelvin, generations of Solarist scholars had established a technical lexicon in order to categorise the manifestations of the planet. Terminology like "fungoids," "mimoids," "symmetriads," "asymmetriads," "vertebrids," "extensors," and "agilus" establish what Carl Freedman identifies as "the generic imprint of scientific and intellectual history" in the novel, which is so effective that "it is with something of a shock that the reader remembers that Solaristics do not, after all, really exist."[214] For Freedman, this genre-identifying language is "a counterfactual yet quasi-factual locus that is cognitively possible."[215] As such, it is a lexical system which helps to define the factual realities of the fictional world of *Solaris* as the characters understand it, despite its actual world counterfactuality. As Freedman points out, this discourse has a quasi-factual locus within the fictional world itself since it largely fails at understanding Solaris. In part, this is due to the impossibility of obtaining reliable data from scientific measurement: sometimes scientific instruments placed in the ocean "almost exploded under the violence of the impulses, sometimes there was total silence; it was impossible to obtain a repetition of any previously observed phenomenon."[216] As Solaris violently rejects scientific measurement, it also undermines the implied precision of scientific language. Reading a Solarist textbook, Kelvin reveals that tidy terms like 'extensor' provide very little precise information regarding the manifestation under discussion:

> Various organic functions have been ascribed to the 'extensors.' […]. An infinite variety of hypotheses now moulder in library basements, eliminated by ingenious, sometimes dangerous experiments. Today, the scientists will go no further than to refer to the 'extensors' as relatively simple, stable formations.[217]

The scientific authority of classificatory language is directly undermined by the language used to describe it in the textbooks from the fictional world: words like "various," "variety," and "relatively" embed doubt and imprecision into the classificatory system. Other excrescences and structures from Solaris are described poetically in the textbook because of the relative inadequacy of scientific language to represent them. As Kelvin points out, mimoids in particular are named for "their most

---

[213] Lem, *Solaris,* 15.
[214] Freedman, *Critical Theory and Science Fiction*, 97.
[215] Freedman, *Critical Theory and Science Fiction*, 97.
[216] Lem, *Solaris,* 21.
[217] Lem, *Solaris,* 118.

astonishing characteristic, the imitation of objects, near or far, external to the ocean itself."[218] The ocean can therefore create facsimiles of inanimate human-derived objects, such as toys or art. The formation of mimoids is described in language so evocative and poetic it is difficult to imagine exactly what it is describing:

> A large flattened disc appears, ragged, with a tar-like coating. […] The observer now becomes a spectator at what looks like a fight to the death as massed ranks of waves converge from all directions like contorted, fleshy mouths which snap greedily around the tattered, fluttering leaf, then plunge into the depths. As each ring of waves breaks and sinks, the fall of this mass of hundreds of thousands of tons is accompanied for an instant by a viscous rumbling, an immense thunderclap. The tarry leaf is overwhelmed, battered and torn apart […]. They bunch into pear-shaped clusters or long strings, merge and rise again, and drag with them an undertow of coagulated shreds of the base of the primal disc.[219]

Although the formation process and the facsimiles are inanimate and alien in structure, the specific language used by Giese, the author of the textbook Kelvin is reading, demonstrates a dependency on the referential language of similes and metaphors. He uses the phrase "tar-like" to describe the surface texture of the nascent mimoid, ignoring the irony implied by the simile that tar is a carbon-based liquid that comes from decayed organic materials, of which Solaris seems to have none. Despite this fact, Giese goes on to describe the mimoid with organic terrestrial imagery, such as "fleshy," "leaf," and "pear-shaped." The mimoid is also anthropomorphised, although it has been made clear in a century of Solaristic study that the ocean of Solaris is fundamentally alien and potentially antagonistic towards the humans that explore it. Nevertheless, Giese attributes it with gladiatorial verve in a "fight to the death," with "massed ranks of waves." Even the adjectives used are evocative of the human condition, with "ragged" and "tattered" discs, and emotional "fleshy" and "contorted" mouths which experience greed.

Giese describes the utterly alien in language which reflects Freedman's quasi-factuality represented by the scientific lexicon of Solaristics. The descriptive analysis represents his understanding of reality but does not represent the reality conditions of the fictional world, perhaps in recognition that it is impossible to do so linguistically. Within the fictional world, this points to the cognitive independence of characters who are distinct enough from other contents of the

[218] Lem, *Solaris,* 118.
[219] Lem, *Solaris,* 118-119.

fictional world that they are able to contextualise or misrepresent it in accordance with their own experience. For the novel, this fracture of accessibility between reality and perception relates to Suvin's concept of 'novum,' which functions within the parameters of cognitive estrangement. Suvin argues that the novum is scientifically and cognitively plausible innovation (and the means in which to understand it), and is a generic necessity in science fiction. He relates the novum to the zero-world, arguing that innovation can only exist in comparison to established reality: "the alternate reality logically necessitated by and proceeding from the narrative kernel of the novum can only function in the oscillating feedback with the author's reality […] because it is as a whole – or because some of its focal relationships are – an *analogy* to that empirical reality."[220] Suvin further states that "however fantastic (in the sense of empirically unverifiable) the characters or worlds described, are always *de nobis fabula narratur*," so that science fiction, dependent as it is upon the contextually resonant novum, will always tell a story (*fabula*) of *us* (*de nobis*), and in particular of the *us* which is the same as the author. [221] Lem himself argues something similar in relation to his work:

> Only the outer shell of this world is formed by the strange phenomena; the inner core has a solid non-fantastic meaning. Thus a story can depict the world as it is, or interpret the world […] or, in most cases, do both things at the same time. As in life we can solve real problems with the help of images of non-existent beings, so in literature we can signal the existence of real problems with the help of *prima facie* impossible occurrences or objects. Even when the happenings it describes are totally impossible, science fiction work may still point out meaningful, indeed rational problems.[222]

Lem implies that this outer crust is highly metaphorical, a simulacrum world which encases a discernible actual-world meaning. In this vein, the scientific discourse in *Solaris* is part of "the outer shell," the "strange phenomena" or which functions "in oscillating feedback" with the actual world readership. This oscillating feedback is part of the fluid relationship actual world readers have with science fiction as genre and as narrative.

---

[220] Suvin, *Metamorphoses of Science Fiction*, 75

[221] Suvin *Metamorphoses of Science Fiction*, 75

Translated, *de nobis fabula narratur* means "the story told about us," translation my own.

[222] Stanisław Lem, *Microworlds*, ed. Franz Rottensteiner, trans. Franz Rottensteiner, et. al. (London: Secker & Warburg, 1985), 37.

Quoted in Carl Tighe, "Stanisław Lem: Socio-Political Sci-Fi," *The Modern Language Review* 94, no. 3 (1999): 768.

On the Solaris station, Kelvin's relationship with the traditions of Solaristics create problems when he encounters a simulacrum of his own. Although Kelvin arrives on the Solaris station with a scientific understanding of his world, he is soon faced with a state of reality which cannot be contained within the established reality conditions of the fictional world. Solaris manifests itself on the orbiting station in the form of visitors who take the form of remembered loved ones, and Kelvin's visitor is a perfect replica of his dead wife Harey. Kelvin's understanding of reality seemingly needs to be altered in order to accommodate this impossible presence, but his ways of thinking are so terrestrially entrenched that although he is able to mimic a change, he is unable to actually convince himself.

Kelvin's fluid engagement with the facts of the fictional world undergoes a significant shift as his time on the Solaris station elapses and as his perceived familiarity with Harey deepens. In his initial encounter with the simulacrum of his wife, Kelvin establishes a cognitive distance from her: "I knew then that it was not [Harey], and I was almost certain that she herself did not know it."[223] Kelvin takes on a particular and convoluted position in this statement. He fails to make a firm distinction between visitor Harey and his dead wife from Earth by using the pronoun 'she' in the second clause (meaning the visitor) to directly refer back to the proper noun "Harey" from the first clause (meaning his dead wife) rather than clearly shifting the object of the sentence. This failure of distinction is further intensified by "herself" following "she," subtly indicating that he perceives that visitor Harey to have subjectivity, individuality, and internality. He does not think of her as a thing, a creature, or even an echo, but as an individual thoughtful being in the same way he considers himself. This stance is intensified by his margin of doubt, with "almost certain." With these words, Kelvin indicates that there is a degree of unknowability, of personhood, about visitor Harey that directly undermines the authority in "I knew then," and the subtle condescension in "she […] did not know." From his first encounter with visitor Harey, Kelvin's perspective familiarises the alien, and establishes what Suvin would call a 'zero-world' that is *de nobis fabula narratur,* where Kelvin is the author and narrator of his own referential reality.[224] It is from this perspective, from Kelvin's own subjectivity, that he proposes to understand the simulacrum of his own longing, his *novum,* the outer crust of a previously unknowable new facet of his reality. Kelvin is confronted with the narrowness of his entrenched perspective, one that is heavily influenced by the quasi-factual status of Solaristics. Unable to alter his own internalised understanding of the world around him, he constructs a new conceptual framework with the new facts around the reality of the

[223] Lem, *Solaris,* 59.
[224] Suvin, *Metamorphoses of Science Fiction*, 75.

fictional world. Although Kelvin will not ultimately succeed in reconfiguring his cognitive position, he begins to create a conceptual basis using many of the same processes in which science fiction establishes and validates the alien and technological nova.

> According to Istavan Csicsery-Ronay Jr.,
>
> > [Science fiction] characteristically transforms scientific and technological ideas into metaphors, by which those ideas are given cultural relevance. […] It takes a body of extratextual propositions believed to be true, with no inherent ethical-cultural significance, and endows it with meaning by incorporating it in fictional stories about characters representing typical values of the author's culture.[225]

Csicsery-Ronay indicates that science fiction allows scientific and technological concepts which are complex and inaccessible to a non-specialist readership to be emptied out, becoming metaphors for accessible cultural concepts. More so, it roots these concepts in the author's culture, which provides a framing matrix of acceptable contextual linkages. Although this argument, formed as it is within the author's and reader's contextual spheres, is not productive when directly applied to a fictional world-centric reading, the process of emptying out a representative system in order to communicate alternative propositions manifests itself within the contextual sphere of the fictional world. Kelvin and his colleague Snow are unsuccessful at studying and understanding the visitors. They therefore empty out the incomprehensible aspects of the visitors to create referential metaphors to justify their own grasp on reality. Although the scientists are not living *in* a science fiction text, they are living *a* science fiction. Faced with a simulacral novum, Snow and Kelvin need to re-adjust their understanding of reality in accordance to the principle of minimal departure in order to suit the newfound facts, using their understanding of reality as the point of deviation. However, as Frederic Jameson argues, this type of contact and understanding between humanity and the alien is difficult, if not impossible. Jameson refers to the readers of a text confronting an alien novum, but the statement also stands when applied to characters within fictional worlds, like Kelvin and Snow: it is "not whether we as readers are able to imagine the new colour, but whether we can imagine the new sense organ and the new body that corresponds to it. […] Whether we can really imagine anything that is not […] derived from sensory knowledge."[226] Jameson emphasises the experiential and sensory nature of a reader's (and Kelvin and Snow's) means of understanding of the world they inhabit, and by extension their dependence upon these basic referential systems

[225] Istavan Csicsery-Ronay, Jr., "The Book is the Alien: On Certain and Uncertain Readings of Lem's *Solaris*," *Science Fiction Studies* 12, no. 1 (1985): 6.
[226] Frederic Jameson, *Archaeologies of the Future* (London: Verso, 2005), 120.

for relating with and rationalising that same world. Faced with a reality which challenges that framework, as Csicsery-Ronay Jr. says, "by incorporating it in fictional stories about characters representing typical values of the author's culture."[227] For Kelvin and Snow, these fictional stories generate an intertextual context around the simulacra that reflects their dependency on relational concepts that is so evident in the persistence of the quasi-factual technical language of Solaristics.

In the final chapters of the novel, Snow looks on the visitors as an attempt at contact by Solaris, saying to Kelvin that:

> "It [Solaris] is blind […] or rather it 'sees' in a different way from ourselves. We do not exist for it in the same sense that we exist for each other. We recognize one another by the appearance of the face and the body. That appearance is a transparent window to the ocean. It introduces itself directly into the brain."[228]

From the outset, Snow formalises an existential distinction between humanity and the alien, including a tacit demotion of status for the alien by referring to 'it' rather than by the proper noun Solaris. Like Giese's description of the mimoids, Snow's anthropocentrism undermines reality as it exists beyond the human scope. He refers to the ocean as something which 'sees,' the inherent assumption being that seeing is fundamental to perceiving true reality. This is emphasised by the use of "transparent window," both of which constitute a visual metaphor for the interrupted act of seeing. This phrase further centralises the visual perception by stating that, although the ocean "introduces itself directly into the brain," it does so through the scrim of one's physical appearance. The overabundance of visual references forms a linguistic justification for imposing an anthropocentric reality condition upon the fictional world. This is done by implying that visual (or something similar) experiences are conditional for real existence by saying that "we do not exist for [the ocean] in the same sense that we exist for each other." Snow goes on to posit that

> "Perhaps [Solaris] used a formula which is not expressed in verbal terms. It may be taken from a recording imprinted on our minds, but a man's memory is stored in terms of nucleic acids etching asynchronous large-moleculed crystals. "It" removed the deepest, most isolated imprint, the most "assimilated" structure, without necessarily knowing what it meant to us."[229]

---

[227] Csicsery-Ronay, Jr., "The Book is the Alien," 6.
[228] Lem, *Solaris,* 202.
[229] Lem, *Solaris,* 202.

When visual metaphors fail to account for Snow's analysis of the ocean, he moves on to verbal references. Despite acknowledging that Solaris may not be "expressed in verbal terms," he nevertheless refers to memories shared with Solaris as "a recording imprinted on our minds" and "etched," bringing together both visual (imprinted, etched) and auditory (recording) metaphors. Imprinting and etching also imply auditory sensation, since this is the way in which vinyl records are made. Although scientific experiments and classificatory nomenclature have failed for a century to explain Solaris, Snow easily falls back into a scientific lexicon to contextualise his understanding of the visitors. Words such as "formula," "nucleic acids," "asynchronous large-moleculed crystals," and "'assimilated' structure" generate another "quasi-factual locus" as Freedman puts it by creating an atmosphere of authority through language which references established components of reality, without acknowledging that these components do not fully represent the elements of that reality.[230]

Snow and Kelvin are taken in by the simulacral elements of the visitors: their human senses 'fall' for the visual and verbal resonances between the visitors and their departed loved ones. Their inability to move beyond this sphere of experience is what dooms their intellectual pursuits to failure. As Jameson says, "the proliferation of theories […] runs wild in the void, since the ocean is not a human creation and can therefore by definition in advance not be understood."[231] This is true from the perspective of the reader, but requires an amendment to apply to the characters of a fictional world. I suggest that the novum within the fictional world cannot be understood from the perspective of the characters for whom it is a novum. It can still be understood because it is part of the fabric of reality within the fictional world, just not from the limited reality that forms the contextual spheres of the alienated characters. In this case, Solaris is part of the reality of the fictional world which exists beyond the margins of Kelvin and Snow's referential linguistic sphere and foundation of knowledge.

Establishing a fictional world-centric approach does not necessarily contravene theories and critical perspectives which are centred upon the relationship of the reader or author to the text. Indeed, these critical perspectives can be useful in reading the development of events and characters from within the fictional world. In *Solaris,* the characters are not living in a science fiction, since most science fictional elements are naturalised within their reality and extratextual history. They are, however, confronted with a simulacral experience of the alien which contravenes their established reality and the conceptual frameworks which they use to structure their understanding

[230] Freedman, *Critical Theory and Science Fiction*, 97.
[231] Jameson, *Archaeologies of the Future*, 115.

of that reality. In their struggle to contact the alien, they employ linguistic, cognitive, and contextual references in a way which echoes the formal conventions and literary strategies of science fiction texts. The humans of *Solaris* then are not living in a science fiction, they are generating one as a means to relate to their expanded awareness of the reality conditions of their world.

Solaris: 1972 – A Space Odyssey

Like Lem's novel, Andrei Tarkovsky's film *Solaris* provides a rich case for testing a fictional world-centric approach, because it seems to demand a contextual (actual world) reading. Tarkovsky's *Solaris* is beset with contextually-driven readings which can problematise reading within the fictional world. Because of Tarkovsky's auteur-like aura in film circles and his use of self-reflexive cinematic practices, *Solaris* is often discussed as a Tarkovskian artwork rather than as a fictional text.[232] *Solaris* therefore seems to be a text which exists almost exclusively for the actual world. In the following section, I will explore how these actual world-centric approaches can help to re-contextualise the fictional world of this particular *Solaris*.

From the opening scene, the referential matrix of the film seems anchored within the actual world by emphasising terrestrial landscapes and using camera movement to emphasise the director's control of the frame. According to Simonetta Salvestroni, images "surmount spatial, temporal, and biological barriers" and create a visual reference which brings "alien places near and humanise[s] them to the point that they come to life and participate in a communicatory

[232] Film is a collaborative medium, in which a large number of cast and crew work together to produce a single product. The auteur director is a concept which allows Romantic views of the singular controlling author to take sway in film. As Peter Schepelern argues, auteurism is a product of viewing film as an art object, "With the director as a singular and outstanding creator, film became not just products from the dream factories of the entertainment industry but works of art." With a cumulative filmograhy of art films, Tarkovsky acquired as much or more prestige than any single one of his films; Vida T. Johnson and Graham Petrie argue that "he set himself up […] as a prophet and oracle and, […] succeeded to a remarkable extent in creating a framework that ensured that his films would be discussed and understood in terms largely established by him." Anna Lawton describes Tarkovsky as a "cinema poet," and Dillon refers him as a misnomered "nature mystic," which point to the tendency to see Tarkovsky's films as a direct result of one man's creative vision.
Dillon, *The Solaris Effect*, 21.
Vida T. Johnson and Graham Petrie, *The Films of Andrei Tarkovsky: A Visual Fugue* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1994), xiv.
Anna Lawton, ed. *The Red Screen: Politics, Society, Art in Soviet Cinema* (London: Routledge, 1992).
Peter Schepelern, "The Making of an Auteur: Notes on the Auteur Theory and Lars von Trier," in *Visual Authorship: Creativity and Intentionality in Media,* eds. Torben Grodal et al. (Copenhagen: Copenhagen University Press, 2004), 102.

relationship."[233] Salvestroni argues that Tarkovsky provides minimal visual information to establish an understanding of what is clearly a functioning future world, and leaves the viewer "to infer its characteristics […] from the uninterrupted file of automobiles that appear to whirl by endlessly […]. Revealing itself obliquely, the Earth of the future emerges from a singular process involving not only the future expressly imagined in the film but also Tarkovsky's own present, Soviet reality in the 1970s."[234] Salvestroni is arguing that cinematic images shrink the conceptual distance between the fictional world and the representation of that world, making it closer and therefore understandable for the viewers by contextualising it to the actual world. Essentially, movies are filmed on Earth, and therefore visually resonate as actual world settings, albeit potentially foreign and futuristic ones. Salvestroni does indicate that these reference points are at times cinematic rather than actual; due to the cinematic mechanism and not a visual citation of an identifiable location, it is still anchored to the actual world by its physical and metaphorical resonances. Although contextual readings explicitly centralise the actual world (such as through audiovisual citations or explicit cinematic mechanisms) which seem to obfuscate a fictional world-centric reading, they can provide a point of departure for such a reading. These communicative images provide the critical reader with contextual information about the fictional world in a similar means through which they contextualise the film within the actual world.

Contextually speaking, there are three distinct perspectives at work: that of the camera, that of the fictional world, and that based on the characters' experiential reality. The first is dealt with by Salvestroni and is experienced by the viewer. The second is that which is shown in part by the camera, which exists 'before' the camera (the physical environment is necessarily present 'before' the camera looks directly at it), and which exists 'after' the camera (the environment does not disappear after the camera looks away). Finally, Kris' experiential reality differs from the camera's and from the objective reality of the fictional world. The film opens with a medium shot of weeds waving in a clear flowing river (figure 8) that fill the frame with green, accompanied by the sound of water gently splashing. The camera slowly pans up the bank over a variety of flora, arriving at Kris' foot. It

Figure 8 – Weeds in the river

[233] Simonetta Salvestroni, "The Science-Fiction Films of Andrei Tarkovsky," ed. and trans. RMP, *Science Fiction Studies* 14, no. 2 (1987): 294.
[234] Salvestroni, "The Science-Fiction Films of Andrei Tarkovsky," 295.

changes trajectory and pans up Kris' body to eventually frame a medium shot of Kris looking away from the camera into the middle distance. For the viewer, this segment cinematically anchors the film and provides oppositional contrast for the upcoming scenes which centralise technology, mechanisation, and the alien Solaris. For Salvestroni, the camera's exploration of the natural contextualises "the future expressly imagined in the film" as well as "Tarkosvky's own present, Soviet reality," emphasising that the image belongs to the fictional world, while simultaneously arguing that the river filmed is an actual river in an actual world location.[235] This image therefore communicates the historical and spatial reality of the fictional world the same way in which the image contextualises the film itself within an actual world historical and spatial dimension. However, there is a third contextualisation that occurs in this moment that Salvestroni does not account for. Kris is also able to see the river and hear its splashing, although his perspective is not the same as that of the camera. For Kris, the river is contextually bound to his experiential history of his family dacha near which the river is located. This spatial and temporal context is utterly subject to Kris' experiences, and is therefore inaccessible for the camera/viewer and is not part the objective reality of the fictional world. Contextual critical models that are oriented to the actual world (like Salvestroni's) can therefore provide a point of departure for reading the fictional world. Access can be further reinforced by self-reflexive cinematic mechanisms, such as an active camera.

As the opening scene continues, the machinery of filmmaking makes itself more evident, with a hard cut back to the river and grasses moving with the current, on which the camera zooms in to a medium shot, standing still for a moment before cutting to the broad-leaved plants of a meadow with the sound of plants rustling and birds chirping. The camera continues to move, panning upward to find Kris, who is turned away from the camera looking into the middle distance outside of the frame. The camera, continuing to slowly drift upwards, maintains a deep focus frame of the misty meadow while Kris wanders out of the right hand edge of the frame (figure 9). The active camera anchors the scene by making itself evident and indifferent to Kris' subjective experience, emphasising the artifice of the film and the audience's presence. This is the art and artifice to which Steven Dillon refers in his study *The Solaris Effect*, which examines the self-aware camera as it denotes what he calls "a fundamental aspect of the cinematic image" which is that the "cinematic image is both present and absent," by which "self-reflexive films overtly

Figure 9 – Kris walks out of the frame

[235] Salvestroni, "The Science-Fiction Films of Andrei Tarkovsky," 295.

break cinematic illusionism in ways that most classical Hollywood films do not."[236] The roving camera in the opening sequence begins with absence (the camera is not made evident through the framing of the river in figure 8) and moves to clear presence (the movements of the camera make its visual control overt). Dillon believes that "reality can break into a fiction film through a documentary effect [;]" "above all, however, it is self-reflexivity that makes manifest the materiality of film, by breaking through the simulacrum. The Solaris effect keeps open the question of the real."[237] The Solaris effect, by which Dillon is referring to the reality-warping effect of the kind of alternately absent and present camera used in *Solaris,* therefore mediates the way in which realities, both that of the actual world and that of the fictional world, are being distinguished. In this sequence, the camera mechanism becomes evident and oppositional to the natural world that is being looked at. The meadow is a long shot from overhead and at an inaccessibly steep angle, emphasising the camera's inhumanity and reinforcing the distinction between its (and the viewer's) referential sphere and Kris'. Kris, once again looking into the fictional world as it exists beyond the frame, is therefore once again subjectively experiencing the objective reality of the fictional world from a different perspective and in a different means than the camera/viewer. The camera seems to have a different agenda than Kris, only meeting up with him occasionally and letting him 'escape' its frame (the impact of a character 'escaping' the camera eye is further discussed with respect to fictional world temporality with Aurora from the film *Cronos*, discussed in Chapter Four). The opening sequence of the film therefore demonstrates that an overt camera does not obfuscate the reality of the fictional world, but rather enables a continuous, coherent representation of the fictional world by physically representing its realities while enabling the characters to experience and demonstrate other conditions of that reality that are not contingent upon the camera mechanism. In this way, the presence of the camera not only enables a fictional world reading, but also enhances the distinction between the three realities at play: the actual, the fictional, and the fictional subjective.

Especially for films created by an 'auteur' director and during a fraught socio-political era, this clarity of tripartite realities can become more difficult to parse. Although it is a science fiction film, *Solaris* is conservative with its representations of technological wonder, bending instead towards the same naturalisation and mundanity that is in many ways expressed in Lem's novel. Tarkovsky made this choice specifically, stating that he adapted the novel

---

[236] Steven Dillon, *The Solaris Effect: Art and Artifice in Contemporary American Film* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2006), 2, 3.
[237] Dillon, *The Solaris Effect,* 16.

> Not at all a result of some fondness for the genre. The main thing is that in *Solaris*, Lem presents a problem that is close to me: the problem of overcoming, of convictions, of moral transformation on the path of struggle within the limits of one's own destiny.[238]

Johnson and Petrie neatly outline this perspective:

> Tarkovsky's film follows the basic outline of Lem's novel quite closely […]. Yet, while doing this, Tarkovsky alters the meaning of Lem's novel almost beyond recognition, and some consideration of the way in which this happens will illuminate what is particularly 'Tarkovskian' about the film.[239]

Tarkovsky eschews the overt trappings of science fiction, since his stated belief is that "the true cinema image is built upon the destruction of genre, upon conflict with it. And the ideas that the artist apparently seeks to express here obviously do not lend themselves to being confined within the parameters of a genre."[240] Ironically, *Solaris* occupies a socio-political contextual space in part because of the genre that Tarkovsky was trying to minimise. Lilya Kaganovsky argues that the film has socio-political resonances, that "the image of the Ocean – the seething alien mass that fills the screen – seems representative of the end point of humanity's scientific advance."[241] She believes that the film belongs to a textual tradition in which "science [is] taken to its limits […], the magnificent and incomprehensible beauty of nuclear holocaust."[242] Kaganovsky, like many other critics, link science fiction created in the 1960s and 1970s with the Cold War, contextualising the fictional aspects of the world of *Solaris* to create a referential matrix to discuss the actual world.

---

[238] Naum Abramov, "Dialogue with Andrei Tarkovsky about Science-Fiction on the Screen," in *Andrei Tarkovsky: Interviews*, edited by John Gianvito (Mississippi: University of Mississippi Press, 2006), 33.
[239] Johnson, *The Films of Andrei Tarkovsky,* 101.
[240] Andrey Tarkovsky, *Sculpting in Time: The Great Russian Filmmaker Discusses His Art*, Translated by Kitty Hunter-Blair (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1987), 150.
[241] Lilya Kaganovsky, "*Solaris* and the White, White Screen," in *Picturing Russia: Explorations in Visual Culture,* edited by Valeria A. Kivelson and Joan Neuberger (New Haven: Yale University Press), 231-2.
[242] Lilya Kaganovsky, "*Solaris* and the White, White Screen," 232.

The tension between a socio-political perspective, Tarkovsky's self-proclaimed efforts to evade the hallmarks of the science fiction genre and the fictional reality is most evident in the five-minute scene during which the disgraced Solarist Burton races down the freeway in a car. The sequence begins when Burton disconnects a video call with Kris' father, warning him of the unusual and eerie occurrences related to Solaris. The sequence is predominantly shot from within the car, watching the roadways as they wind onward (figure 10). The extreme long shot reinforces the long distances travelled. The overhead lights rushing past denote the high rate of speed with which Burton is moving through the tunnels and over the overpasses, while the desaturate colours of the cityscape encourage the impression that the impressive urban vista is mundane and uninteresting.[243] The prolonged travel sequence is interspersed with reverse medium shots of Burton in the centre of the frame looking down from the camera, with a blue tone (figure 11). Occasionally, the shots are not reversed, but the camera is positioned behind Burton to look past him and out the windscreen. The diegetic soundscape in Burton's car is highly mechanical, with amplified road noise, mechanical scraping and beeping, muffled voices from passing cars, revving engines and mechanized shrieks. The passing signage and vehicular markings are in Japanese despite the characters speaking Russian, indicating a multilingual and multicultural urban environment (figure 12).[244] The culmination of this five-minute sequence is an overhead extreme

Figure 10 – Tunnel lights convey speed

Figure 11 – Burton in a blue frame

[243] The steep angle of the streams of overhead lights and the markings on the road in figure 3 create an intertextual echo with other classic science fiction in film and television, in which radiating streams of light emit from a vanishing point to evoke high speeds of travel, usually various forms of faster than light travel. This effect has become a generic shorthand in popular television shows such as *Star Trek* (figure 14) and in popular films such as *Star Wars* (figure 15). This particular visual effect also links to Stanley Kubrick's *2001: A Space Odyssey*, which is discussed below.

figure 14 – Speed in *Star Trek: The Next Generation*
"11001001," *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, broadcast syndication, February 1, 1988, television broadcast.

Figure 15 – Speed in *Star Wars: Episode IV*
Star Wars: Episode IV, directed by George Lucas (Lucasfilm, 1977).

[244] Stephen Dalton, "Andrei Tarkovsky, *Solaris* and *Stalker:* The Making of Two Inner-Space Odysseys," *BFI* (December 2014) bfi.orc.uk/features/tarkovsky.

long shot of congested city streets which shows the overwhelming mechanical and technological progress of the megacity (figure 13).

Figure 12 – Japanese signage in a Russian film

Figure 13 – The urban megalopolis

Contextual knowledge, including production and historical information, can help redirect actual world-centric readings towards the fictional world. As explored in Chapter One, although a film's narration does not constitute the fictional world, it does compose points of access through which the audience can glimpse the reality conditions of the fictional world. In the case of *Solaris*, Tarkovsky's choices are curated and create the overall impression of control over the film, encouraging both a narrative- and production-centric approach. Actual world knowledge about the director's influences and choices assist in identifying the elements of the film which speak directly to these influences, and therefore also assist in accessing the facts of the fictional world. The Japanese signage, for example, is because Tarkovsky shot the sequence in Tokyo to establish an alien and futuristic atmosphere for the contemporary Soviet audience who would be familiar with cities which are very different to the Japanese megalopolis.[245] This production knowledge helps to isolate an otherwise tiny detail, which therefore encourages critical readings that would otherwise not take place. In this case, the signage helps to establish the city scape of the fictional world as part of a larger globalised socioeconomic culture, creating a visual citation which contextualises the local experience as it is represented by the film within a vast international world that exists beyond the camera's scope. This process of recognition and exclusion is also helpful, for example, in reading the occasional reverse shots of Burton's face (Figure 11). The perspective is changeable, with the camera either positioned where the windscreen should be, looking alternately outward at the road and inward at Burton, or positioned behind Burton looking forward. This emphasises the presence of the camera as distinct from the reality conditions of the fictional world, moving as it does in and around Burton. The position of the camera is a mediator between the viewer's reality, Burton's subjective reality, and the objective reality of the fictional world, similar to the effect of the roving camera used in the opening sequence of the film. The dull greys of the cityscape and the solemn blue tint of the interior of the car mark what Johnson and Petrie call the "particularly Tarkovskian"

[245] Stephen Dalton, "Andrei Tarkovsky, *Solaris* and *Stalker.*"

touch of humanising the technologic aspects of science fiction, making them less spectacular and more mundane.[246] Despite the overt presence of a directorial voice, directorial technique or cinematic mechanism does not obscure the reality of the fictional world. The blue tone inside of Burton's car does not change to reflect the changing lighting conditions as his car moves in and out of sunlight and electric lighting. Because of this, figure 11 and other tinted scenes do not connote reality conditions of the fictional world because of their inconsistency and incoherence with other fictional facts.

Tarkovsky's hand is also evident in that these characteristic elements are mundane and terrestrial rather than spectacularly technological, as might be expected in the genre of science fiction, generating a cinematic image "built upon the destruction of genre, upon conflict with it."[247] This is particularly evident in comparison to Stanley Kubrick's *2001: A Space Odyssey*, to which *Solaris* is sometimes seen as a Soviet "kind of response to Stanley Kubrick's cooly scientific" film.[248] Tarkovsky does not hold *2001* in high esteem: "Let alone that *2001: A Space Odyssey* is phony on many points even for specialists. For a true work of art, the fake must be eliminated. I would like to shoot *Solaris* in a way that the viewer would be unaware of any exoticism. Of course, I'm referring to the exoticism of technology."[249] These two Cold War era films therefore evoke competition, where Burton's car travel sequence is a direct parallel to the sequence from *2001* in which Bowman gets pulled through space. Like Burton's travel scene (figure 10), Kubrick's scene uses an extreme long shot to denote vast distances, with lights radiating outward from a vanishing horizon to mark movement (figure 16). The sequence is shot in neon kaleidoscopic colour, a stark contrast to Tarkovsky's dampened greys. The camera looks forward, but the scene is interspersed with reverse shots of Bowman in varying depths of close up. Tarkovsky's sequence is set on Earth with Burton clothed in rumpled casual clothing, whereas Kubrick's is set at the extremities of space, with Bowman in a futuristic bright red space suit and the vibrant lights of his shuttle reflected in his visor (figure 17).[250]

Figure 16 – Interstellar speed as radiating colours

[246] Johnson, *The Films of Andrei Tarkovsky,* 101.
[247] Tarkovsky, *Sculpting in Time,* 150.
[248] Lilya Kaganovsky, "*Solaris* and the White, White Screen," 231.
[249] Abramov, "Dialogue with Andrei Tarkovsky about Science-Fiction on the Screen," 36.
[250] Steven Soderbergh's *Solaris,* discussed in the following section, engages in this intertextual conversation with a matching shot of Chris. Although his suit is a metallic grey, it appears red thanks to the airlock warning lights. The close up of Chris' face shows the lights of his shuttle reflected in his visor, like *2001*, but his placid expression echoes Tarkovsky's *Solaris* in figure 18, below.

Figure 17 – Lights reflected on a red space suit

Tarkovsky's soundscape is a mechanised version of Kubrick's operatic one in which sustained choral notes fall down the scale to transform into a dissonant sustained orchestral crescendo, overlaid with metallic buzzing and scraping. Some of Tarkovsky's choices in the production of *Solaris* are therefore clearly formulated response to *2001,* making these particular resonances part of an intertextual sphere of Cold War science fiction cinema. Tarkovsky's explicit presence therefore alters the way in which the fictional world is represented, but also enables a critical reading which emphasises the internality of characters and the respective impact that events in the plot may or may not have on the larger fictional world. Ultimately, understanding Tarkovsky's intention and techniques with *Solaris* help to reinforce the tripartite perspective of the realities of the fictional world as it is seen by the viewer, as it is experienced subjectively by the character, and as it exists objectively.

As suggested by Csicsery-Ronay Jr. and Frederic Jameson in the previous section, science fictions with their estrangement, nova, and technological dependencies are often read as a social parable, a constructed simulacrum which refracts contextual issues to make the issue and its consequences (or resolution) clear to the reader.[251] In Cold War texts in particular, this simulacrum maintains the unresolved speculations which lead to texts which deal closely with abstracted concepts around the Cold War, rather than the realities of the War itself. Jacques Derrida comments on these constructed concepts, which include what he refers to as speed:

> People find it easy to say that in nuclear war 'humanity' runs the risk of its self-destruction with nothing left over, no remainder. […] But whatever credence we give it, we have to recognize that these stakes appear in the experience of a race, or more precisely, of a *competition,* a rivalry between two rates of speed.[252]

Figure 18 – Kelvin's red space suit in *Solaris* (2002)

[251] See pages 79 and 80.

[252] Jacques Derrida, et.al., "No Apocalypse, Not Now (Full Speed Ahead, Seven Missiles, Seven Missives)," *Diacritics 14, no. 2* (1984): 20.

This sense of rivalry which was especially popular in political action and thriller films including various films in the James Bond franchise such as *From Russia With Love* (Young 1968) and *Moonraker* (Gilbert 1979), *The Manchurian Candidate* (Frankenheimer 1962), and *The Spy Who Came In from the Cold* (Ritt 1965) hinges on privileged information, misinformation, and a race to thwart the opposition. Although it is a concept which reinforces the reductionist view of the standoff of deterrence, speed and competition has become a hallmark of Cold War texts such as Kubrick's *Dr. Strangelove or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb* (1964). Christine Cornea explains that in Soviet science fiction particularly,

> Media attention was focused upon developments in rocket science reputedly designed to enhance, rather than destroy, human life. In this sense, the 'story' of the Space Race helped reinvigorate the image and reputation of scientific and technological development in the popular imagination.[253]

The successful launch of Sputnik by the Soviet Union in 1957 and NASA's successful moon landing in 1969 became part of the competitive "big 'science story' of the 1960s," such that the public consciousness was as taken with the promise of scientific progress as it was with the uncanny anticipation of nuclear war. [254]

As a simulacrum, the scene in which Burton travels through the cityscape evokes the speed and momentum to which Derrida refers, particularly with the central vanishing point which radiates white road markings and overhead lights. Its intertextuality with *2001* evokes an atmosphere of competition as well as the revisionist and simplifying tendencies of Cold War texts. This revisionist tendency is also evident in the highly mundane expression of space travel. The Solaris Station, for example, is represented as a broken down and dishevelled poor copy of Earth, its austere white rooms dotted with leather chairs and homely amenities (figure 19), the wood library featuring artworks and candles (figure 20), and each of the residents of the Station are dressed in their casual clothes (figure 21). These aspects seem to directly undermine the expectation of achievement and wonder in space technology. The overall effect of these aspects of space travel are perhaps those most indicative of *Solaris* as a Cold War text, in that it reads itself out of the competition, anxiety, and fear brought about by nuclear threat. When embracing this perspective, it becomes clear that Tarkovsky's disdain for the technologic trappings of science fiction, the pervading atmosphere of the Cold War, and the changing cultural perspectives of space-oriented development have no

[253] Christine Cornea, *Science Fiction Cinema: Between Fantasy and Reality* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, Ltd, 2007), 76.
[254] Cornea, *Science Fiction Cinema,* 76.

bearing on the fictional world, and are indeed representative categories that enable the communication of a larger social metaphor such as auteurship or the Cold War. In recognising these representative processes at work within the actual world, it becomes easier to isolate the fictional world, including its associated facts. The viewer familiar with science fiction might experience dissatisfaction with the Solaris station, which is a poor and uncared-for version of the expected spectacular (or horrifying) examples of space travel in other similar films (like *2001: A Space Odysseyl*), or even the cool clean lines of the rocket in *Planet of the Apes* (Schaffner 1968). Recognising that this disappointment is contextually linked to Tarkovsky's aesthetic choices or a contextual response to Cold War consciousness allows for the critical reader to identify the elements which inspire this reactive reading, and to read apart from these actual world citations. The traditional library, the leather armchairs and leaden bookshelves, and the casual clothing therefore resonates instead against the historical reality of the fictional world. The station is decrepit because it is a physical remnant of a dying science that has failed to adequately balance the value of its proffered scientific findings with the financial and social cost of its continued use. Its consistent use resulted in its Earthly amenities and the mental distress of its current occupants is highlighted by its disorder. Actual world factors can therefore be helpful in a fictional world-centric perspective by providing a lens through which it becomes possible to distinguish the simulacrum of contextually charged science fiction from the reality of the fictional world.

Figure 19 – Padded rooms and leather chairs

Figure 20 – A Wood library full of art

Figure 21 – Casual clothing and comfortable furniture

Solaris: 2002 – A Colourful Remake

The fictional world of Tarkovsky's *Solaris* can be seen around and between the film's considerable contextual resonances. Lem's fictional world similarly pushes back against the constraints of genre frameworks, adapting those frameworks to operate within its own context. Steven Soderbergh's *Solaris* exists in the critical sphere in a very different sense than do Lem's and Tarkovsky's, though it is almost always linked in scholarship with them. The film exists critically as a remake, an adaptation, and an intertextual iteration of an idea generated by Lem's novel. In this section, I will not be arguing for a particular view of adaptation, or outlining an adaptation reading of Soderbergh's *Solaris*. Instead, I will be looking at the ways in which adaptation does – or rather, does not – manifest itself within the fictional world, and how an adaptation-driven reading can be helpful with a fictional world-oriented approach. It might seem that comparative readings and adaptation studies are counter-productive for a close reading of the fictional world, since such readings are based on structural analysis, generic tendencies, contextual information (both directorial and historical), and textual analysis. At the level of the fictional world, adaptation theory is largely ineffective, considering the independent and individuated nature of fictional worlds. However, the types of comparative analysis that have traditionally, now controversially, preoccupied adaptation studies are useful in opening an avenue through which the viewer can access the reality of the fictional world. The actual world relationships between adaptations allow for a unique type of comparison between fictional worlds, since they are distinguished not only by their differences but also by their similarities. I would like to note here that, as with most 'fidelity'-adaptation theory, cataloguing similarities and differences between fictional worlds in adaptations is of little use. However, comparative resonances can identify distinguishing elements in differing fictional worlds, therefore enabling the viewer to gain a unique engagement with the objective realities of the fictional world that the subjective experiences of the characters and even the camera may not identify.

In an interview with Geoff Andrew, Soderbergh says that he "wasn't at all of a mind that the Tarkovsky film could be improved upon [and he] thought there was a very different interpretation to be had."[255] He goes on to say that the analogy he uses "was that the Lem book, which was full of so many ideas that you could probably make a handful of films from it, was the

[255] Steven Soderbergh and George Clooney, interviewed by Geoff Andrew, "Interview with Steven Soderbergh and George Clooney," *Steven Soderbergh*, Contemporary Film Directors, ed. Aaron Baker, February 12, 2003. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2011), 98.

seed, and that Tarkovsky generated a sequoia and we were sort of trying to make a little bonsai."[256] Despite Soderbergh's protestations, *Solaris* scholars regularly compare his film with Tarkovsky's, using its status as a remake to provide a contextual and intertextual foundation for critical readings. Dillon, for example, suggests that

> A movie that is called *Solaris* and that starts with rain has rain from Tarkovsky, not Lem. It rains on and off in the opening section of Tarkovsky's *Solaris*, and through so many of Tarkovsky's films that rain amounts to a visual signature.[257]

Dillon's reading clearly privileges an adaptive reading of *Solaris.* He does not imagine the ways in which rain might be of importance within the narrative of Soderbergh's film, but asks instead *where* the idea for rain came from, subsequently limiting the potential responses to Lem's novel and Tarkovsky's film. Indeed, Dillon goes on to state that "Soderbergh's *Solaris is* a remake of Tarkovsky's film, and a much more interesting film if read that way."[258] Dillon is arguing here for an authoritative intertextuality. Although he does conclude by implying that the film can stand apart from Tarkovsky's, he does also hint that the film would lose much of its impact should this be the case. Sven Lütticken argues that a 'good' remake brings attention to the differences between texts, and that any repetition should be "perverted from within, exacerbating the newness that disguises sameness until it changed its sign," an "auto-deconstruction and reconstruction […] the result could yield a messianic now-time, anachronistic non-identity or any number of bewildering admixtures of the two." [259] This type of remake – of which Lütticken argues Soderbergh's *Solaris* is not one – would bind together the source and remake texts into a binary in which the admixture of old and new would generate meaning which would be otherwise opaque. Lütticken's ideal remake is therefore not only critically dependent on its actual world relationships, but so is its content value, since its successful structure would depend on a self-reflexive metacommentary.

Mark Gallagher is more expansive in his evaluation of Soderbergh's success in remaking *Solaris.* He argues that the Soderbergh's film is indebted to Tarkovsky's film and to the conventions of Hollywood cinema both narratively and technically. He writes that, in contrast to Lem's novel, "both films are distinguished by narrative ambiguity, limited interest in genre iconography, and manipulation of film-romance conventions."[260] Both films leave out the lengthy info-dumps from

---

[256] Soderbergh, interview, 98.
[257] Dillon, *The Solaris Effect*, 39.
[258] Dillon, *The Solaris Effect*, 39.
[259] Lütticken, "Planet of the Remakes," *New Left Review* 25 (2004): 116, 117.
[260] Mark Gallagher, *Another Steven Soderbergh Experience: Authorship and Contemporary Hollywood* (Austin: University of Texas Press), 187.

Lem's *Solaris*, set a high proportion of their screen time on Earth, and narratively centralise the psychological elements of the romance between Chris and Rheya. These resonances can structure a complex adaptive relationship between fictional texts which is most often medium specific. The pairing of colourated scenes, for example, are a visual cinematic effect which gives "viewers this momentary layering of Hollywood's then-current technologies."[261] These layers are what Lütticken would see as an initial attempt at creating a meaningful "messianic now-time" in which both films structure a simultaneous binary viewing experience. Gallagher, in less extravagant terms, proposes something similar, in which narrative and formal layering provides

> Metacommentaries on cinematic redemption and mediated communication […]. [I]t metaphorically acknowledges its debt to the two previous versions of *Solaris*. In its narrative manipulation through editing and its emphasis on mediated images and memories, the newer *Solaris* emulates the reshaping processes of textual adaptation and film remakes.[262]

One such form of mediated communication in *Solaris* is the manipulation of colour, which echoes Tarkovsky's similarly coloured screens such as the blue tint of Burton's car travel sequence in figure 4, and which also resonates with the popularisation of coloured screens around the turn of the millennium in such films as *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* (Gilliam 1998) (which features neon screens), *The Matrix* (L and L Wachowski 1999) (which is predominantly a desaturate green), and *The Royal Tenenbaums* (Anderson 2001) (where colour washes and lighting provide a rainbow palette).

The visual similarity between films reinforces the medium-specific nature of the remake, and puts this in opposition to the narrative resonances of adaptation. In both films, the colouring helps to distinguish narrative categories, although the screen in Soderbergh's *Solaris* is not tinted in the same way as Tarkovsky's screen is tinted. The colouration is due largely to palette and diegetic lighting, rather than distinctive washes. There are three main colour schemes: desaturate green (figure 22) which demarcates Chris' life on Earth after Rheya dies, saturate gold (figure 23) which demarcates Chris' memories of Rheya on Earth, and icy blue (figure 24) which is the colour of the space station. These can be compared to Tarkovsky's colour palettes, which include the rich greens of naturalistic scenes (figure 8), intense deep blue as seen in figure 11, and the warm yellows and browns associated with Hari and earthly comforts (figures 20 and 25). In comparison, it is clear that

[261] Gallagher, *Another Steven Soderbergh Experience*, 187.
[262] Gallagher, *Another Steven Soderbergh Experience*, 187.

there is a significant difference in colouration with respect to saturation (the intensity is significantly reduced from Tarkovsky's bold tones), transparency, and technical application (the wash effect is evident in Tarkovsky's film, whereas Soderbergh's colouration is predominantly produced by lighting and set dressing). This difference does enable the metacommentary relationship discussed by Gallagher both aesthetically and technically, as Dillon points out: the tinted screen

> Has everything to do with his repeated performances of the Solaris effect. […] When our vision is mediated, not transparent, we are made aware of the artifact, of its construction. With the tinted screen and with other similarly self-reflexive gestures, Soderbergh repeatedly makes us aware of the cinematic medium.[263]

This self-reflexive and medium-specific trait, which is also seen and discussed with reference to the intrusive roving camera in the opening sequence of Tarkovsky's *Solaris* (pages 84 and 85) is a visual effect that does not (and cannot) appear in Lem's novel because of the textual medium. Although these effects help to structure the viewer's response to the subjective experiences of the fictional character, their metacommentary enforces the perspective of the director and the viewer to the same degree. The type of readings generated from the work of Lütticken, Dillon, and Gallagher can, however, be shifted in order to take advantage of the dominant voice of comparative analysis when discussing remakes and adaptation and use it to provide access to a fictional world otherwise concealed beneath colour and actuality.

Figure 22 – Kelvin in desaturate green

Figure 23 – Memory in gold

Figure 24 – Ice blue on the Solaris station

Figure 25 – Hari in warm yellow

[263] Dillon, *The Solaris Effect*, 23.

With the dominance of actual world-centric analyses in criticism of adaptations – particularly with respect to contextual, medial, and textual considerations – it is helpful to centralise the character in any comparative reading. As discussed in Part One and in Chapter One, the fictional world is difficult to circumscribe, but is more readily described as the world of the character (pages 18, 20, 21, and 29). The character, by virtue of being fictional, is precisely as real as the world around them, and as such can be discussed as individuals engaging with that world directly through subjective experience. In adaptations, however, this subjectivisation and individuation of character becomes more problematic. This is because the same or similar characters seem to appear in multiple fictional worlds, an effect which is more pronounced in very faithful adaptations such as *The Green Mile* (Darabont 1999), *Sin City* (Miller 2005), and *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* (Columbus 2001), in which characters are so similar to their source material, they seem to occupy both fictional worlds simultaneously. In the *Solaris*-es, the distinctions between characters are clear enough that this is less of a problem, although Dillon sees a clear affiliation between the physical traits of characters between the two films:

> George Clooney's large round rugged head topped with short black hair, a head that bears a strong resemblance to that of Donatas Banionis, the original Kris. And Natascha McElhone is also not so far away from Natalya Bondarchuk, considering all casting possibilities.[264]

Dillon is conflating the actors with the characters (see page 57 for more on representation) in order to emphasise the visual resonances between Tarkovsky's and Soderbergh's *Solaris*, but these similarities are not sustained at the level of the fictional world. Rheya, for example, undergoes more than a name change across adaptations (see footnote 185 on page 68). Her history with Chris is different in each text, as are her interactions with crew members and her non-dialogic behaviours. Nevertheless, Rheya is undoubtedly the same character in each text, displaying crucial transitive properties (qualities or characteristics which are the same in different versions) however narrative or superficial: she is Chris' dead love who manifests to him aboard the Solaris station, struggles with her identity, and commits suicide twice. She has long dark hair, bare feet, and a dearth of self-confidence. David Lewis argues that these similarities make each Rheya (and Harey and Hari) counterparts of each other. He argues that

[264] Dillon, *The Solaris Effect*, 40.

> Within any one world, things of every category are individuated just as they are in the actual world; things in different worlds are *never* identical […]. The counterpart relation is our substitute for identity between things in different worlds.[265]

Lewis states here that, simply by virtue of being in a different world, things are distinct from each other, although they can be similar. The counterpart is therefore the character in an alternate possible world which is the most similar to that character in any other given world, relating the Rheyas despite their distinctions and differences. Although Lewis has formed his argument with relation to possible worlds theory, this relationship can form the basis for discussing individual subjective experiences of characters in adaptations.

In order for a comparative adaptation analysis to function in a fictional world-centric approach, two clarifications must be made, which Ruth Ronen points out:

> Two aspects of the mode of organization of fictional entities manifest the *fictionality* of the domain. These aspects correspond to the constraints imposed by the understander of fictional entities: (1) Every fictional domain is structured as a parallel and not a ramifying domain relative to reality or to its versions. The fictional domain of entities illustrates this parallelism in the fact that the centrality and actuality of entities in the fictional world is uncorrelated to the ontological status of these entities (to their being imaginary or real-world counterparts). (2) Every fictional domain has its unique mode of organization. The fictional domain of entities is organized by rhetorical modes of definitization that affirm the autonomy and self-sufficiency of the world constructed. In the domain of entities, as in other fictional domains, modes of organization specific to fiction are activated in a context. Facing a text known to be fictional, the reader understands the world textually constructed as a world uncommitted to reality […]. The reader also understands the fictional world as a world constructing its own set of referents; understanding fiction hence requires the activation of definitization procedures.[266]

Ronen takes as her point of departure that fictional domains (what I call fictional worlds) are distinct and autonomous, meaning that they are not contingent upon any other worlds, as I have argued in Part One, although we differ upon the categorisation of autonomy. In section one, Ronen agrees

---

[265] Lewis, "Counterpart Theory and Quantified Modal Logic," 114.
For a more in-depth reading of counterpart theory in relation to my view of fictional worlds, see Part One pages 32 and 33.
[266] Ronen, *Possible Worlds in Literary Theory,* 143.

with me that characters central to the fictional world, and that their actuality (what I refer to as reality) is precisely as actual as the world itself. In short, characters share the same reality conditions as the world they live in, and since fictional worlds are independent, then similar characters across worlds are distinct from each other. This means that the analysis of Harey, for example, cannot stand for an analysis of Hari or Rheya. Ronen goes on to say that since fictional worlds, by the virtue of being fiction, are "uncommitted to reality" as a function of their construction (or its "modes of definitization"), Rheya, Hari and Harey are therefore distinct not only because they are central to their own fictional worlds, but also because they are fictional in themselves. She doesn't deny that fictional characters don't have to have actual world counterparts, but she also doesn't confirm that a potential connection to the actual world is necessary for the "centrality and actuality of entities" in a fictional world.[267] Ronen is here arguing that characters in adaptations (or remakes, in the case of Soderbergh's *Solaris*) can – and should – be regarded and studied as unrelated and individuated characters ("fictional entities"), and that the similarities which make them counterparts are not fundamental to the fictional entity themselves.

With Ronen's interventions, comparative readings can be productive for a fictional world-centric perspective. The critical reader can therefore engage with the counterpart relationship, and even technical and narrative relationships between adaptations, while keeping in mind that these relationships are not of the fictional world and cannot alter the reality conditions of that world. Doing so can provide an actual world framework through which the reality conditions of the fictional world can be seen and discussed. There are few scenes which appear in all three *Solaris*-es, but in each, the moment when Rheya first appears to Chris is as impactful for the audience as it is for the characters. When Harey first appears to Kelvin in Lem's *Solaris*, she is seen from afar, and the narrative first person allows for a direct expression of Kelvin's subjective impressions:

> The curtains were half drawn, and there, opposite me, beside the window-pane lit by the red sun, someone was sitting. It was Rheya. She was wearing a white beach dress, the material stretched tightly over her breasts. She sat with her legs crossed; her feet were bare. Motionless, leaning on her sun-tanned arms, she gazed at me from beneath her black lashes: Rheya, with her dark hair brushed back.[268]

The room, lit with a red sunrise, creates a mediated perspective similar to the colourated screens of the films. Unlike the two films, in which the camera's perspective creates a different view of the

[267] Ronen uses the term 'actual' to mean fully realised, whereas I have used it in this project to refer to our reality as opposed to that of fictional worlds.
[268] Lem, *Solaris*, 54.

fictional world than the one Chris (or Kris) would have, because of the first person narration in the novel, the reader is granted limited access to the subjective view Kelvin has as he looks at Harey sensually from a distance. His eyes rove across her body in a familiar and covetous way, seeing how the material of her dress is "stretched tightly over her breasts," moving down her legs to note her bare feet, which signal her physical comfort and familiarity in the space. Although her feet will eventually be a marker for Kelvin of her uncanny alien nature ("The skin was soft, like that of a newborn child. I knew then that it was not Rheya, and I was almost certain that she herself did not know it."), at this moment, her bare feet are revealing and familiar.[269] Kelvin also notes that he is the subject of her gaze, making her seem bold at returning his obviously objectifying look flirtatiously, looking at him "from beneath her black lashes." Harey's direct coy look differs from Rheya's wide, blunt gaze and Hari's sidelong look, emphasising the subjectivity of her own experience of events as much as the first person focalisation emphasises Kelvin's.

When Hari first appears to Kris in Tarkovsky's film, she is lit with soft, even lighting, and the costuming and lighting has a warm yellow and brown palette (figure 26). In both films, the women are on the bed, but Rheya is propped upright on her right arm (figure 27), as if she were disturbed while asleep, whereas Hari is prone, resting undisturbed and calm on the pillow. Hari's physical behaviour seems to show that she is at peace, unaware of Kris' unease and her own simulacral nature. She takes up the majority of the screen, dominating the viewer's visual field as she would similarly shock and overwhelm Kris' senses with her sudden appearance. Out of the side of her eye, she peers upward past the frame to where Kris would be behind the camera. Her indirect gaze seems slightly coy, this impression redoubled by her very slight smile which contrasts Rheya's direct wide-eyed gaze and neutral expression. The close up framing evokes intimacy and comfort, an impression reinforced by the soft pillow and her handmade crocheted shawl. The scene therefore emphasises Kris' mixed emotions for Hari, promoting a subjectivised perspective while self-consciously limiting the viewer's visual access to the fictional world.

Figure 26 – Hari watching Kelvin

Figure 27 – Rheya watching Kelvin

[269] Lem, *Solaris*, 59.

In Soderbergh's film, Rheya is sidelit with direct low key lighting and high contrast, with a cold blue palette, echoing film noir (figure 27). The frame is asymmetrical, with Rheya on the right, evoking the void left by Chris on her left. She is looking up past the top of the frame towards where Chris is standing. Thanks to the lighting, the asymmetrical framing, and Rheya's upright active body position, the close up does not evoke intimacy, but rather conveys an uncomfortable physical proximity. Although the framing belongs to the narration of the film, and therefore to the actual world, it provides a visual context in which the non-narrative aspects of the scene become evident. In this case, the camera eye suggests Chris's perspective, although it doesn't mirror it (the angle of Rheya's gaze indicates that Chris is standing just above and to the left of the camera's position). The asymmetrical frame and close up perspective also isolate and create a singular and individualised experience which permits the reader to sympathise with Chris' view of Rheya: that her presence is unexpected and not entirely welcome. In comparison, these first encounters differ significantly. It is what Ronen calls "rhetorical modes of definitization" which resonate against each other.[270] Noting and comparing these distinctions are productive in initiating Gallagher's metacommentary relationship of Soderbergh's film to the other *Solaris*-es or Dillon's Solaris effect in which through the intervention of the cinematic medium "we are made aware of the artifact, of its construction."[271]

Conversely, these comparisons highlight the individuality of each visitor and the different reality conditions of each fictional world as distinct, rather than as adaptations. Harey's flirtatious and slightly shy look from under her lashes directly goes against Hari's coy and indirect look from the corner of her eye and Rheya's blunt wide gaze. Although actual world elements such as narrative technique, contextual knowledge, and medium intervene in the presence of adaptation in the fictional world, it is possible to use the adaptive framework to examine the particularities of each fictional world, and use them to help re-orient the critical perspective to the fictional world. In each text, for example, the lighting creates an atmosphere which enables the audience to engage with the subjective experiences of the characters. In each scene, the lighting is motivated, meaning that the experience of the lighting and subsequent mood of the fictional world can be accessed by the viewer or reader. In Lem, the light of the red alien sun shines in through the half open window. In Tarkovsky, the room is flooded with morning light from another alien sun, although it is mediated by the thick radiation-proof glass of the Solaris station windows, making it gold. In Soderbergh, the harsh blue-white light is emitted from a small bedside reading lamp since the encounter happens

[270] Ronen, *Possible Worlds in Literary Theory,* 143.
[271] Dillon, *The Solaris Effect*, 23.

at night. This comparison not only demonstrates the distinctness of each fictional world and their experienced reality and individuates each visitor by visually representing states of affairs from their experiential fictional world, but also denotes their internality and subjectivity in a way that contradicts the visual. Rheya's direct gaze contradicts the shadowy and turbulent atmosphere generated by the intertextual resonances generated by the noir-like lighting.[272] She is guile-less and direct, the high contrast lighting having no effect on her professed happiness at seeing Chris. Although the blue palette and slanting light do evoke Chris' perturbed state at seeing his dead wife lying on his bed in a space station orbiting an alien planet, her internal state is not subject to the film's aesthetic or focalisation (which are oriented to Chris as the protagonist). The framing and lighting of the scene therefore create a narrative resonance which helps the viewer understand her upcoming narrative turbulence, and encourage a semi-subjective reading through Chris' point of view. Although the tonality of the frame establishes a cool and unsettling atmosphere, it has no effect on Rheya's subjective experience.

Once Rheya's subjectivity and individuality is established, it becomes easier to see the fictional world as it exists beyond the camera frame in its triplicate perspective of the subjective, the objective, and the actual. Subjectively, her experiences become as fundamental to the reality of the fictional world as Chris', even though she is not the protagonist. Subsequently, it becomes easier to see that narrative events are only a partial representation of the character's experience of the fictional world. Rheya's experiences beyond the scope of the film therefore establish an objective reality in which she operates, and which has its own reality conditions. When Chris sends the first Rheya away in a shuttle, it is clear that she continues to experience the terror and pain of separation, even after Chris is no longer part of that experience. In figure 29, she can be seen in the

[272] Film noir, well known for its *femme fatale* characters, communicative camera work and convoluted plots, amongst other traits, which feature in such films as *The Maltese Falcon* (Huston, 1941), with neo-noir films like *Basic Instinct* (Verhoeven, 1992) following this aesthetic and formal pattern. The conventions of film noir are initiated in the film, especially with respect to the lighting, the secretive atmosphere aboard the station, and Rheya's powerful and threatening presence. Although Soderbergh maintains the direct high contrast low key lighting scheme, the other generic traits of film noir fall away as the plot unfolds, giving *Solaris* the visual resonance of noir without making it a neo-noir film. This visual resonance is particularly evident in figure 28 below, in which Chris is looking up a staircase. The asymmetrical framing, steep angle, geometric structure, low-key high-contrast lighting, and muted colours all point towards strong film noir influences in the film.

Figure 28 – Kelvin at the bottom of a noir staircase


Figure 29 – Rheya in exile behind Kelvin

window of the shuttle behind Chris' right shoulder. She is no longer relevant to the camera, narrative, and focalisation. She is in shadow in the deep background. She is out of focus and made nearly invisible as the audience's eyes are pulled away from her face by the deep black of Chris' shirt as it contrasts with the bright white lights of the airlock. And yet, despite her dismissal from the narrative and narration, her subjective experience continues. Although the shuttle is not shown in flight, it left the station and drifted away into the outer space of the fictional world. This type of technology is currently impossible within the scope of the actual world, and so the principle of minimal departure (see Part One, pages 19 and 20) dictates that the adjustment must be made to accommodate for this divergence from the actual world experience of the viewer. The specifics of space travel have not, however, been established within the scope of the film to make it easy for the audience to accommodate Rheya's experience; Chris' shuttle is shown docking at the station, but the mechanics of space travel are not shown. This therefore necessitates that the understanding of Rheya's experience of space travel echoes that of Chris', mandating reality conditions at play that the viewer cannot access or comprehend.

Obliquely accessing Rheya's subjective experience of reality creates an interesting extra dimension for the film which exists beyond the scope of the narrative, justifies a subjective reality in the fictional world which can be directly experienced, and establishes a set of reality conditions which are otherwise objectively inaccessible. Lastly, these conclusions provide insight into Rheya's simulacral nature which Chris and Gordon are unable to grasp: that the visitors are *real* in the same way that the characters are real. In light of Rheya's experience, we can return to Ronen's statements about fictional entities, including those with counterparts; it can be said that "the centrality and actuality of entities in the fictional world is uncorrelated to the ontological status of these entities," and that "the reader also understands the fictional world as a world constructing its own set of referents."[273] Rheya's actuality and centrality, her 'realness,' is the same as the reality of the world she is in and the means by which she was created. Although Rheya is contentiously 'real' for Chris, the humans aboard the station, and the audience, she is undeniably real and individuated in the objective fictional world. Rheya's character is freed from the science-fiction

[273] Ronen, *Possible Worlds in Literary Theory*, 143.

dependence on contact and explanation, from Chris projecting his own needs upon her, and from the narrative contexts in which the simulacrums of Solaris are restricted.

Taken together, each of the frameworks set out in this chapter can be problematic for fictional world-centric readings as they critically prioritise the actual world's genres, context, history, intertextuality and medium. However, as seen in first section of this chapter, generic aspects of the text encourage a distinct means of making sense of the fictional world and which centralises the experiential and referential realities of the character. Genre-driven criticism can be used to apply genre-specific critical methodologies to the realities and characters of the fictional world, creating a referential framework which enables the reader or viewer to access these realities. The contextual and intertextual relationships of a text were shown to be similarly productive, where actual world information enables a process of analysis and careful exclusion to isolate and examine the reality of the fictional world apart from the expectations formed by a text's production context. Finally, the critical methods used with respect to the fictional worlds Lem's and Tarkovsky's *Solaris*-es come together in the comparative analysis of adaptations. Adaptations provide a useful comparative framework which is a productive starting point to orient a critical reading to the fictional world. Similarities, differences, and resonances across adaptations seem at first to obscure the individual reality of the fictional world, but with closer analysis, these elements can help direct a reading towards the fictional world and away from the potential subjective limitations of narrative focalisation. These comparisons help to isolate the character's experience of the fictional world, identifying its reality conditions that enables them to be more easily critically read and explored.

Chapter Three: Keeping it Real – Myth and Myth-Making in *American Gods* and *Anansi Boys*

American Gods and *Anansi Boys* are novels which deal closely with the mythic. *American Gods* follows Shadow, a man caught in the midst of a war between the old gods of tradition and the new gods of technology and innovation. *Anansi Boys* follows Fat Charlie and his brother Spider, sons of the storytelling trickster god Anansi as they weave their way through their fictional world with the powers of mythopoeic voice.

In this chapter, I will be looking closely at myth in literature and considering how the mythic is differentiated in a fictional world-centric reading. I will be building on the analyses of fictional worlds, characters, and intertextuality explored in Chapters One and Two in order to consider the experience of the mythic in the fictional world, and how the character motivates and experiences fictionality. In Chapter Two, I looked at how genre does – and more often, does not – operate within the fictional world. In this chapter, although I am looking at fantasy novels, I will not reconsider theories of genre. In many ways, the language of myth links to the way in which myth participates in the reader's experience of a novel as a fantasy text, since myth is also functional and personal. In this sense, my exploration of myth will steer away from the formal and structural tendencies of myth scholarship and focus instead on the way in which the characters interact with the 'otherworldly' within the reality of their own fictional world. Because fictional worlds are – necessarily – fictional, conditions which are referential, subjective, or transitory in the actual world have the potential to be established elements of the reality conditions of the fictional world. The fantastic, the mythic and the magical do not only lose their inherent impossibility, but can become integral to the cohesive reality experienced by the characters and partially expressed to the reader or viewer through the narration.

Myth-Busting in *American Gods*

American Gods tells the story of Shadow's experiences travelling across America in service of the mysterious Mr. Wednesday. Shadow encounters wastrel gods who have been brought to America by believing immigrants only to be forgotten by them with the passing of generations; he seeks to enlist them as soldiers in Wednesday's war against the new gods of technology and media. The novel uses the language and symbols of the mythic in a way which is easily identifiable for the

reader. And yet, within the fictional world, these mythic elements lose their supernatural and sacred power. The mythic dimension of *American Gods* becomes an aspect of the real – an aspect that is secret and distinct from the average person – but real nonetheless.

Although her work focuses on the form and function of fantasy literature, Kathryn Hume's study *Fantasy and Mimesis* provides useful terms and concepts for looking at alternate reality perspectives within fictional worlds. Hume distinguishes fantasy from other literatures on the basis of its mimetic qualities:

> Much literature does present lifelike actions and describe objects in the world we know. People, actions, and settings can be integrated in ways that we recognize as signifying or resembling what we consider reality. But literature has always been more than such a representation.[274]

She points out that there is a coherent understanding of the world, and that literature at a significant remove from that coherent understanding becomes fantasy: "Moreover, numerous works, past and present deliberately depart from the norms of what can be called consensus reality, the reality we depend on for everyday action."[275] Hume's consensus reality can be linked with Darko Suvin's zero-world which is addressed in more detail in Chapter Two (pages 69-71). As argued in Part One (pages 26, 35, and 38), this consensus reality is that of the actual world, and encapsulates experiences across individuals that are similar enough that they can be expressed as a singular verifiable reality. Within the fictional world, the nature of consensus reality is the same: it is the reality conditions of a world which are (to a significant degree) experienced similarly by different characters. The characters who form the consensus reality in the fictional world are those who are most similar to the reader and are therefore those through whom readers access the fictional world (see the principle of minimal departure in Part One, pages 19 and 20), those who present the most cohesive view of reality, and those whose perspective of reality best accounts for the events and states of affairs of the fictional world.[276]

---

[274] Hume, *Fantasy and Mimesis,* xi.

[275] Hume, *Fantasy and Mimesis,* xi.

[276] In the case of *Fight Club* (Chapter One) Tyler is not part of the consensus reality because he does not exist for anyone in the fictional world except for the Narrator, even though Tyler's existence is the most logical explanation for the Narrator's erratic behaviour in the context of the narrative. The authority of the consensus reality is especially important when discussing fictional worlds of speculative fictions from genres such as magical realism, fantasy and science fiction. In Patrick Rothfuss' novel *The Name of The Wind* (2008), for example, it is reasonable for the characters to see sympathy (a scientific form of magic) as responsible for the incredible feats achieved by practitioners in the novel, since they understand the laws of magic, see its effects, and it is a more rational explanation in the novel's context than chance, coincidence,

The limitations of consensus reality are not clear until they are challenged by something which does not fall within that consensus sphere. Shadow's first experience of the rupture of consensus reality is when his wife appears to him in a hotel room after having died and been buried. Shadow is so struck by what should be the impossibility of her presence that he is unsure whether it was a hallucination or real: "Maybe it was a dream – but it wasn't – or maybe I inhaled some of the fat kid's synthetic toad-skin smoke, or probably I'm just going mad…"[277] Shadow experiences a departure from the consensus reality and immediately seeks to rationalise it. In doing so, he creates unreal alternatives only to undermine them. He opens the possibility of alternatives in his use of 'maybe.' Rather than implying a potentiality, 'maybe' here indicates Shadow's explicit awareness that the action described did not in fact happen: "Maybe it was a dream" directly implies that he considers this eventuality very unlikely, which is supported by his own contrastive interjection of "but it wasn't," stated definitively so as to shut down the hope that Laura was a dream. The use of 'maybe' as a negative speculation also applies to the toad-skin smoke, its unlikeliness cemented by the more definitive speculation of 'probably'. Shadow is unable to accept that the fictional world might operate with reality conditions of which he has no direct previous experience. Rather than looking outward at the fictional world, Shadow blames the subjectivity of his own experience for the inexplicable presence of his dead wife: a dream, a trip, madness. Despite Shadow's incredulity, Laura was real and physically present. He notes that he can smell and touch her ("Her breath smelled, faintly, of mothballs. […] [Her tongue] was cold, and dry, and tasted of cigarettes and of bile.") and the next morning, he sees tangible traces of her moving through his hotel room: "Laura's muddy footprints had been visible on the motel carpet when he got up that morning, leading from his bedroom to the lobby and out the door."[278] Shadow is negotiating contradictory input. Hume, in defining subcategories of fantasy, names contrastive worlds which "are a special subset of the subtractive, in that they refine the complexity of reality down to two centres of interest; the tension between these two constitutes a comment on the nature of reality."[279] Although it is against Hume's intention of discussing the formal genres of fantasy, this contrastive method of viewing worlds applies directly to the way in which characters might engage with aspects of their realities which contravene their consensus reality: they have contrastive perspectives which "refine the complexity of reality down to two centres of interest." With Shadow's experience of Laura, the two centres of

---

or acts of god. Sympathy is therefore part of the consensus reality. Other forms of magical reality, such as the existence of the Chandrian, is beyond the experience of nearly all inhabitants of the fictional world and so are not part of the consensus reality, even though the protagonist Kvothe has direct experience of them.

[277] Gaiman, *American Gods*, 65.

[278] Gaiman, *American Gods*, 64, 70.

[279] Hume, *Fantasy and Mimesis,* 83.

reality are captured in the semantic duality of "maybe it was a dream – but it wasn't." The inherent tension between hesitancy and certainty therefore constitutes a comment on the distance between the reality of the fictional world and the consensus reality.

Tzvetan Todorov discusses the importance of hesitation for precisely the conflict which Shadow experiences around Laura's appearance:

> In a world which is indeed our world, the one we know, a world without devils, sylphides, or vampires, there occurs an event which cannot be explained by the laws of this same familiar world. The person who experiences the event must opt for one of two possible solutions: either he is the victim of an illusion of the senses, of a product of the imagination – and laws of the world then remain what they are; or else the event has indeed taken place, it is an integral part of reality – but then this reality is controlled by laws unknown to us. Either the devil is an illusion, an imaginary being; or else he really exists, precisely like other living beings – with this reservation, that we encounter him infrequently.[280]

Shadow's debate of maybes is precisely what Todorov describes: events "cannot be explained by the laws of this same familiar world," where Shadow seeks to explain that he is "the victim of the illusion of the senses." ("maybe it was a dream […] or maybe I inhaled some […] smoke, or probably I'm just going mad…").[281] He is also confronted with evidence that "the event has indeed taken place, it is an integral part of reality" (her smell, taste, touch, and physical traces). Todorov's aim is to establish the parameters of the genre of the fantastic, which he argues is what

> Occupies the duration of this uncertainty. Once we choose one answer or the other, we leave the fantastic for a neighboring genre, the uncanny or the marvelous. The fantastic is that hesitation experienced by a person who knows only the laws of nature, confronting an apparently supernatural event.[282]

Shadow's reaction to his first encounter with his dead wife is one such "apparently supernatural event"; it does not adhere to the consensus reality which he takes to be "the laws of nature." However, our goal here is not to establish *American Gods* as a fantastic novel, but to examine how the fantastic and mythic function within the fictional world. Todorov goes on to say that the reader is primary in the experience of the fantastic: "*the reader's hesitation* is therefore the first condition

---

[280] Todorov, *The Fantastic,* 25.
[281] Gaiman, *American Gods*, 65.
[282] Todorov, *The Fantastic,* 25.

of the fantastic," and that "this hesitation may also be experienced by a character; thus the reader's role is so to speak entrusted to a character, and at the same time the hesitation is represented, it becomes one of the themes of the work – in the case of naïve reading, the actual reader identifies himself with the character"[283] This type of hesitation – as experienced by Shadow – is certainly a dominant theme of the text, and his bombardment with both the "laws of nature" and "apparently supernatural event[s]" throughout the novel allows the reader to identify and empathise with Shadow's novel-length engagement with hesitation.

Within the fictional world of *American Gods*, however, hesitation *becomes* part of the "laws of nature." In the final paragraph of the novel, Shadow "reached into nowhere, and took a gold coin from the air," just as the ill-fated leprechaun Mad Sweeney taught him. He then goes on to flip the coin with his thumb, where

> It spun golden at the top of its arc, in the sunlight, and it glittered and glinted and hung there in the midsummer sky as if it was never going to come down. Maybe it never would. Shadow didn't wait to see.[284]

Shadow's thoughts follow a similar trajectory to his 'maybe' hesitation when he first encounters Laura after her death, but rather than becoming progressively and authoritatively doubtful of his own senses ("maybe" he is dreaming or hallucinating becomes "probably" he is mad), he becomes increasingly dismissive of the importance of his own understanding of the "laws of nature." Initially, his 'as if,' in "as if it was never going to come down," suggests that the coin is going to fall, but the impression of weightlessness that an object gains at the apex of a parabolic arc suggests it has the potentiality of remaining aloft. Shadow goes on to think that "maybe it never would," altering the certainty of the coin falling to even odds whether the coin will fall or not. He dismisses the importance of the coin's gravitational state: "he didn't wait to see". He acknowledges that hesitation – as a simultaneous possibility of the laws of nature and a manifestation of the supernatural – can be not only an experience of reality, but also a condition of that reality. He comes to acknowledge that his subjective experience of reality – the reality of the fictional world – has not and will not be able to account for the realities of the objective world.[285] In this way, in the fictional

---

[283] Todorov, *The Fantastic,* 31. Original emphasis.
Todorov, *The Fantastic,* 33.
[284] Gaiman, *American Gods*, 588.
[285] Christopher Nolan's *Inception* (2010) employs a similar experience with a spinning top. In this case, the spinning of the top is used to help the protagonist identify whether he is inside a dreamscape or whether he is experiencing reality. If the top falls, his experiences are real. If it does not stop spinning, he is inside a dream. At the conclusion of the film, the top is shown spinning and wobbling on its axis, but the film ends before the audience can see it fall (or not). In this case, the top does not operate in a dual moment of equal

world of *American Gods*, hesitation is no longer linked to the subjective experience of the character as a stand-in for the reader but is instead an aspect of the reality conditions of the fictional world.

The promotion of hesitation as a duality from a transitory condition (in that it is seeking to resolve between natural/uncanny and supernatural/marvellous) to a fixed reality condition can be particularly problematic when the overtly uncanny or supernatural is experienced by a character in a world where hesitation is a reality condition. In *American Gods,* this appears in that which seems to be the supernatural or marvellous, expressed as the mythic. The uncanny features less prominently in *American Gods*, but I will deal closely with the effect of the uncanny within fictional worlds in my discussion of *The Devil's Backbone* in Chapter Four (pages 135-139). The mythic is common within the genre of fantasy. As Hume puts it, a "technique open to fantasy is the addition of a mythic dimension. This may introduce a divine or at least superior world, a demonic one, or even one that is superimposed upon our own, coexistive with it but invisible."[286] In Gaiman's work, in addition to *Anansi Boys,* discussed in the next section of this chapter, his novel *The Ocean at the End of the Lane* (2014) reflects English, Scottish, and Irish ideas of fairy, and his graphic novel *Sandman* (2010) combines Greek and Roman mythologies with Western tropes of the personification of Dream (also known as Morpheus). Elsewhere, Charles De Lint's *The Onion Girl* (2001), Hiromi Goto's *A Chorus of Mushrooms* (1994), Gerald Brom's *The Child Thief* (2009), and graphic novel series such as Brian Azarello's *Wonder Woman* for DC (2012) engage with the content and form of national mythological systems to produce contemporary fantasy.

The new gods in *American Gods* are those of everyday, the ones who are worshiped with peoples' dedicated time and attention: "gods of credit card and freeway, of Internet and telephone, of radio and hospital and television, gods of plastic and of beeper and of neon."[287] These gods, of which there are many more, seem to echo Roland Barthes' concept of contemporary myth. The god of media, for example, appears to Shadow as Lucy Ricardo in an episode of *I Love Lucy* on the television. Shadow asks who she is, to which she answers "I'm the idiot box. I'm the TV. I'm the all-seeing eye and the world of the cathode ray. I'm the boob tube. I'm the little shrine the family gathers to adore. […] The TV's the altar. I'm what people are sacrificing [their time] to."[288]

---

possibility; its stillness is contingent on a particular reality. In the dreamscape, it cannot fall. In this way, the top does not signify a hesitation, but rather an instance in which the audience is deprived of information which would be otherwise knowable from within the fictional world.

[286] Kathryn Hume, *Fantasy and Mimesis,* 87.

[287] Gaiman, *American Gods*, 137-8.

[288] Gaiman, *American Gods*, 175.

It would be tempting to approach Media as Lucy as a Barthesian myth, like Greta Garbo, but she is also a real character with physical properties within the fictional world.[289] After Wednesday is murdered by the new gods, the old and the new gods agree to meet. Upon arrival, Media meets Shadow in a different physical form than the ones she has previously manifested: "She was perfectly made-up, perfectly coiffed. She reminded him of every newscaster he'd ever seen on morning television sitting in a studio that didn't really resemble a living room."[290] She is a tangible part of the reality of the fictional world beyond her function within the text as a sign. She is a character, and as such has an internal and subjective experience, and interacts with other characters and objects which are part of the reality of the fictional world. It might however be argued that Media demonstrates that there is ideology of myth in the fictional world. In the actual world the mythic is distinguished from reality; in the fictional word, the mythic and the mundane can coincide. In *American Gods*, the mythic is distinguished by its departure from the consensus reality of the fictional world, but only so far as the experience of hesitation allows for the subjective experience of individual characters to not fully realise the totality of the real.[291]

The confluence of consensus reality and the condition of hesitation necessarily manifests itself differently in oral tradition, in written forms like the novel, and in audio-visual forms like film. Eleazar Meletinski relates the importance of form in myth to the relationship between the importance of a symbol's form and the cultural environment in which it exists:

> Mythological symbols function in such a way that social and individual behavior and world view, by which I mean an axiological model of the world, are reciprocally reinforced within a given system. Myth explains and sanctions the social and cosmic order that corresponds to a particular culture. By attempting to explain the nature of man and the universe, myth reinforces the status quo.[292]

---

[289] Roland Barthes, "The Face of Garbo," in *Mythologies*, trans. Annette Lavers (London: Vintage, 1993), 56-67.

[290] Gaiman, *American Gods*, 431.

[291] I would like to distinguish here between a reality which is not explained by the consensus reality of characters, and unreliable narration. As James Phelan points out (see Chapter One, page 46), unreliable narration includes omission, misrepresentation, or addition from the objective fictional world that would be otherwise evident from within the fictional world. This is the case with the Narrator of both the novel and the film *Fight Club* as discussed in Chapter One. Despite the limitations of the narrative voice, from within the fictional world, it would be obvious that Tyler and the Narrator are one and the same. In *American Gods*, however, the mythic reality is available at all times to those who can perceive it: its absence from the consensus reality is based on a question of access, and not unreliability.

[292] Eleazar M. Meletinsky, *The Poetics of Myth*, translated by Guy Lanoue and Alexandre Sadetsky (London: Routledge, 1998), 156.

As a result of removing a mythic tradition from its cultural context, either by retelling, adapting, or incorporation in an alternative media, part of its essential purpose would be lost, since that is fundamentally bound to "the social and cosmic order" and the "status quo" of the society from which it originated. Laurence Coupe also supports this position, arguing that "it is usually a good idea when dealing with a myth to consider what it is 'doing' as well as what it is 'saying': that is, to bear in mind the pragmatic impulse which would have occasioned it in the first place."[293] He believes, like Meletinsky, that myth is intrinsically bound to its context, 'doing' as much as 'saying,' and therefore myth's relevance is at least in part inextricable from its environment. Brian Attebery argues that, especially with respect to myth, its medium and context are fundamental to its communication of meaning:

> There is an enormous difference between a bare text in a book and myth wrapped in its full cultural context. Much of the significance of a traditional story is implied rather than stated outright, many of the meanings depend on cultural knowledge external to the text itself, and the intentions behind any performance will vary according to the audience and the situation.[294]

The medium of communication seems here to be linked to the efficacy and impact of myth. Attebery implies that the "bare text in a book" cannot convey the fullness of mythic thinking because myth is historically linked to a particular need or cultural context: "literary texts do not come immersed in belief systems, ways of life, and interpretive schemata, as do myths in oral cultures. That is the other part of fantasy's mythic method, to provide living contexts to replace the ones stripped from mythic texts."[295] He sees the mythic in literary texts as a bare version of contextualised traditional storytelling and performance, seeming to imply that literary texts rob something from traditional storytelling in the process. He does, however, posit that the literary text as a medium establishes a different context within which the myths maintain an altered ideological and social power. Novels like *American Gods* "combin[e] romance forms with postmodern techniques to produce fantasies of framed or situated myth"; they use "narrative structures that mimic the disjunction of two or more worldviews. In their fiction, different mythic systems meet and clash. Each demonstrates an awareness of the incompleteness of any one source of vision and the inability of any one writer to claim complete ownership even of his or her own mythic

[293] Coupe, *Myth,* 7.
[294] Attebery, *Stories About Stories,* 16.
[295] Attebery, *Stories About Stories*, 50.

traditions."[296] In *American Gods*, Shadow's narrative is interspersed with contextualising tales titled "Coming to America" which explain the origin of some of the American old gods. These seem to provide some actual-world context or 'flavour' for audiences unfamiliar with traditional tales, or who might not connect to a mythic logic. They give the reader a hint at the body of belief which informs the behaviour and desires of each American god, while contrasting them with Shadow's wary perspective. Narratively, these techniques and structures provide a myth context which contains enough situating information to fuel the mythic components, but also generates an alternative worldview which localises the literary myth in an accessible contemporary voice (Shadow's narrative).

I would argue, however, that the way in which myth occupies a non-traditional contemporary context is significantly altered within the context of the fictional world, in large part because it is not part of the traditional mythic legacy of the actual world. The fictional world of *American Gods* is mythically self-referential. The American gods are real because they experienced real worship in America. In Wednesday's case, voyagers arrived by boat to a strange land in A.D. 813, where they built a wooden hall where, "in the smoky darkness of their hall, that night, the bard sang them the old songs. He sang of Odin, the All-Father" who was to become Wednesday.[297] The newcomers then took a skraeling hostage, "carried him at the head of a procession to an ash tree on the hill overlooking the bay, where they put a rope around his neck and hung him high in the wind, their tribute to the All-Father, the gallows lord."[298] With this profession of belief and sacrifice,[299] Odin the All-Father came to America, where he stayed: "It was more than a hundred years before Leif the Fortunate […] rediscovered that land […]. His gods were already waiting for him when he arrived."[300] The mythic existence of Wednesday, as a contemporary American Odin, is, in Attebery's words, "wrapped in its full cultural context."[301] The fictional world is its own living and evolving mythic context – not in the way Attebery intends, in which contemporary mythic texts exists in a narrative and social intertextual sphere which informs their relevance – but as a living development of the ideological, social, and contextual needs of myth for the characters within the fictional world.

---

[296] Attebery, *Stories About Stories*, 192.
[297] Gaiman, *American Gods,* 67.
[298] Gaiman, *American Gods,* 68.
[299] This is an example of how characters might themselves engage or alter the reality of the fictional world through an act of mythogenesis. I will discuss this further in reference to mythopoeic voice in *Anansi Boys* which will occur in the next section of this chapter.
[300] Gaiman, *American Gods,* 69.
[301] Attebery, *Stories About Stories,* 16.

The internal self-contextualisation of the mythic dimension is the final aspect through which consensus reality, hesitation, ideology and mythification are significant as they relate to the fictional world as it is experienced by Shadow. Shortly after Shadow and Wednesday gather together a party of the most powerful old gods, they meet at a place of great latent power, upon which humans have unwittingly been compelled by this nameless power to build the World's Largest Carousel as a roadside attraction. The gods use the power of the carousel to expand reality to include the reality of the mythic. As the consensus reality is warped, Shadow attempts to grasp the expanding scope of reality as he becomes able to perceive it:

> Shadow turned, slowly, streaming images of himself as he moved, frozen moments, each him captured in a fraction of a second, every tiny movement lasting for an infinite period. The images that reached his mind made no sense: it was like seeing the world through the multifaceted jeweled eyes of a dragonfly, but each facet saw something completely different, and he was unable to combine the things he was seeing, or thought he was seeing, into a whole that made any sense.
>
> He was looking at Mr. Nancy, an old black man with a pencil mustache, in his check sports jacket and his lemon-yellow gloves, riding a carousel lion as it rose and lowered, high in the air; and, at the same time, in the same place, he saw a jeweled spider as high as a horse, its eyes an emerald nebula, strutting, staring down at him; and simultaneously he was looking at an extraordinarily tall man with teal-coloured skin and three sets of arms, wearing a flowing ostrich-feather headdress, his face painted with red stripes, riding an irritated golden lion, two of his six hands holding on tightly to the beast's mane; and he was also seeing a young black boy, dressed in rags, his left foot all swollen and crawling with blackflies; and last of all, and behind all these things, Shadow was looking at a tiny brown spider, hiding under a withered ochre leaf.
>
> Shadow saw all these things, and he knew they were the same thing.[302]

Mathilda Slabbert and Leonie Vilijoen might point to the events on the carousel as evidence of Shadow's shamanistic status rather than as an extended experience of reality. Their definition of shaman as one who "possesses the ability to transcend the mundane and interact with beings and spirits on a higher level, without becoming their instrument or

[302] Gaiman, *American Gods*, 131.

being possessed by them" indicates that Shadow is a shaman because his "interaction with gods and demons, and his qualities as healer, saviour or mediator establish him as a shaman in the metamythology presented in *American [G]ods* and confirm his liminal role in the in-between place he occupies in the world of the novel."[303] In many ways, Shadow's experience of reality beyond the consensus reality seem to manifest as shamanic experiences as they are set out. This depends, however, on the mythological nature (or as Slabbert and Vilijoen put it, the "metamythology") of the gods in the novel. In events such as those on the carousel, the gods manifest their multiple reality, but not their mythical power. Throughout the novel, the gods are at the whims of humans for transport, for strength, and in Shadow's case, to enact change in the wider world. Shadow experiences Anansi as a multiplicity of contextual and ideological representations, a violation of the consensus reality which has Anansi appear as "an elderly black man wearing a bright checked suit and canary-yellow gloves. He was a small man, the kind of little old man who looked as if the passing of the years had shrunk him."[304] He does not experience him as a mythological figure, but as a singularity that can be thought of as a hesitation in reality. Although his actions and experiences can be expressed as shamanic in Slabbert and Vilijoen's terms, the collapse of mythic iconography into the fictional reality renatures Shadow's experiences as real rather than mystical. His departure from consensus reality results in Todorovian hesitation, and which resolves into his experience of reality outside of consensus reality as a permanent moment of hesitation in which both natural and supernatural reasoning are at play. Unlike Shadow's first encounter with Laura – discussed above – he does not try to undermine his subjective experiences as dream, hallucination or delusion. He is initially unsure how he was receiving the information of the complete reality of Anansi – evidenced by the indefinite use of 'thought': "the things he was seeing, or thought he was seeing" – ultimately, however, he is convinced of their truthfulness: 'thought' is modified to the certainty of 'knew' in "he knew they were the same thing". Although Anansi's full reality is outside of consensus reality, Shadow becomes certain as he processes his experience of Anansi.

Within the fictional world, hesitation replaces the supernatural elements of the mythological. This is evidenced by Shadow's temporal and physical experiences on the carousel. Because of the nature of the novel as a linear medium, the events on the carousel

[303] Mathilda Slabbert and Leonie Vilijoen, "Sustaining the Imaginative Life: Mythology and Fantasy in Neil Gaiman's *American Gods*," *Literator* 27, no. 3 (2006): 140.
[304] Gaiman, *American Gods,* 124.

manifest as dilation – both temporal and spatial. For the reader, Anansi on the carousel is experienced over multiple lines and in a linear fashion (one line of print at a time) so that the experience is protracted and Anansi's selves are presented one after the other. This dilation allows for the reader's hesitation to establish ground on both sides of the hesitation duality: the linear narrative resolves the impossibilities of time and space, whereas the mythological provides the marvellous explanation for the impossibilities of simultaneous multiplicity. For Shadow, the hesitation does not resolve in these ways, but enables him to experience reality as the gods do, as neither and both natural and supernatural. Shadow experiences temporal dilation as he comes to grips with the flaws in his understanding of the reality conditions of the fictional world: "Shadow turned, slowly, streaming images of himself as he moved, frozen moments, each him captured in a fraction of a second, every tiny movement lasting for an infinite period."[305] Shadow attempts to make sense of the carousel event using the tools he already has at his cognitive disposal, such as analogy and simile: "it was like seeing the world through the multifaceted jeweled eyes of a dragonfly". These analogies fail immediately ("but each facet saw something different"), leaving him unable to relate his experiences to his known reality: "he was unable to combine the things he was seeing, […] into a whole that made any sense". Although this process of attempted accommodation takes very little time in the fictional world, there is an extended durational experience for Shadow, who expresses his experience of time as arrested ("frozen" and "captured") and never-ending ("every tiny movement lasting for an infinite period").[306] The expansion of time directly contradicts its instantaneity, described as "at the same time," "simultaneously," and "also." Spatially, unlike the reader who is bound to print, Anansi appears as the colourful old man, the jeweled spider, the ritualised man, the impoverished boy, and the cunning spider who all occur "in the same place," but this does not mean that they were indistinguishable. The "tiny brown spider, hiding under a withered ochre leaf" was also hiding "behind all those things" which "were the same thing." These forms are therefore distinct parts of one multifaceted singularity which Shadow is only able to perceive because of his temporary "dragonfly" vision of the gods' reality. Although Shadow and the audience experience hesitation at the same moment, their temporal and spatial engagement with it is distinct. This difference is reflective of Shadow's temporary ability,

[305] Gaiman, *American Gods*, 131.

[306] For a closer look at duration as an expression of time, see Part One, pages 40-43. Temporality of narrative and the fictional world is discussed in greater depth in Chapter 4, as it relates to three films by Guillermo del Toro.

and the reader's inability, to experience the effects of full fictional reality as it is available to Anansi and the other old ones.

Shadow's experience of explicit hesitation on the carousel does not resolve, as Todorov argues all hesitation must, because his experience cannot exist as natural nor as marvellous. The reality of the American gods is outside of his understanding of the laws of his world, as part of the consensus reality. At the same time, Shadow understands that the gods are a real, tangible aspect of his own world, and not envoys or manifestations of another. They are made by human believers who carried their practices and stories to America, and their behaviour is bound to their representative relationship to the people of America. The reader of *American Gods* is not granted access to the full reality of the fictional world because Shadow, the character who is closest in type and form to the reader, is not given this access. The behaviour and manifestation of the gods appear mythical because they are structured around mythical forms from the actual world: stories like those of Odin which remain in the eddas and sagas of the Old Norse cultures, and stories of Anansi which are retold and rewritten in the Akan tradition. It also appears mythical because, as a resolution to our experience of hesitation, we as readers resolve on the side of the marvellous, reflecting our living engagement with formulaic concepts like 'gods' and 'belief.' From within the fictional world, however, the mythic language and legacy of the actual world can become enfolded within its plastic representation of reality. This reality can be fractious or elusive, victim to consensus and subjectivity. However, the impact of *American Gods* is fundamentally altered when Shadow becomes the arbiter of reality. Characters who take control of their reality can sometimes alter it, generating realities and belief systems which echo the mythological elements of fantasy. This process, which I call mythopoeic voice, is an extension of Shadow's role in *American Gods*, and plays out in the novel *Anansi Boys*, discussed in the next section.

Anansi Boys – I Could be Talked Into it with Mythopoeic Voice

Language and myth are often one and the same. Roland Barthes argues that the language of myth is mythic not because of its content, but because of that which it signifies: its ideological power:

> Mythical speech is made of a material which has *already* been worked on so as to make it suitable for communication: it is because all the materials of myth (whether pictorial or written) presuppose a signifying consciousness, that one can reason about them while discounting their substance. This substance is unimportant [.][307]

This presupposed "signifying consciousness" of myth can be in the form of language, as in the first line of *Anansi Boys:* "In the beginning, after all, were the words, and they came with a tune. That was how the world was made, how the void was divided, how the lands and the stars and the dreams and the little gods and the animals, how all of them came into the world."[308] This clearly evokes the beginning verses of the Bible from the book of Genesis: "In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. Then God said, 'Let there be light'; and there was light."[309] The form, content, and subject of both quotations are the same, opening with "In the beginning," and following the same structure to describe how words were instrumental in separating the void and speaking into being all of the elements of human experience. To use Barthes' terms, the first lines of *Anansi Boys* "is made of a material which has *already* been worked on," borrowing the gravitas and true-feeling of the Bible by mimicking its form and content to evoke power through mythic speech. Mythic speech in *Anansi Boys* is not, however, the ideological second-order system of signification proposed by Barthes; the act of speaking with authority and mythic intent in the novel results in acts of creation which alter the reality of the fictional world rather than evoke larger mythological concepts.

Anansi Boys follows Fat Charlie Nancy, a protagonist whose life is utterly unremarkable, until his enigmatic father dies and he learns from an old family acquaintance that he has a brother. In the days following his father's death, Fat Charlie's brother Spider shows up, manifesting all sorts of incredible objects and events simply by describing them aloud. Fat Charlie's life rapidly begins to unravel into events of heartbreak, murder, and magic. Spider and his powerful speech is at the centre of it all, wielding the story and song power of their father, the Akan trickster Anansi.

Spider's power of speaking something into being is not one that is part of the consensus reality of the fictional world, although his manifestations are very real once they are created. In this way, the way in which characters like Spider can 'speak-into-being' is similar to the way in which mythopoeic literature occupies a quasi-mythic space. For this reason, I call this effect *mythopoeic*

---

[307] Barthes, *Mythologies*, 110.
[308] Neil Gaiman, *Anansi Boys*, 1.
[309] Genesis 1:1-3 NRSV.

voice. For instance, while Fat Charlie was sleeping off a hangover, Spider took his place at work, and convinced all of the workers there that he was Fat Charlie, simply by telling them that he was: "He wandered through the offices, and when anyone asked him who he was, he would say 'I'm Fat Charlie Nancy,' and he'd say it in his god-voice, which would make whatever he said practically true."[310] Spider's use of language in this passage does not directly evoke a particular mythological reference, but the descriptor of his voice as "his god-voice" generates sufficient authority for it to be reasonable that Spider's voice could "make whatever he said practically true." The inclusion of mythic elements, forms and styles is characteristic of mythopoeic literature, which Laurence Coupe succinctly describes: "literary works may be regarded as 'mythopoeic', tending to create or recreate certain narratives which human beings take to be crucial to their understanding of the world."[311] In this sense, mythopoeic literature consists of narratives which structure a mythological - or mythological-like environment - which is fundamental to the way in which characters understand their world and affects the way in which they interact with it. These mythopoeic narratives evoke narrative forms, tropes, and symbols which are already imbued with mythic importance (such as the opening lines of *Anansi Boys* evoking the Bible) in order to establish their own mythic dimensions.[312] Scholars like Andrew Von Hendy believe that this communicative function of mythology is "the hermeneutical activity of telling the stories allegorically," and as such is representational: mythology is the interpretation of myth in narrative form.[313] This is an extension of actual-world mythological traditions, which are based on continued interpersonal and intergenerational communication.

There is therefore a link between mythology, mythopoeic literature, and mythopoeic voice on the basis of communication. Don Cupitt points out that language as a creative force is not exclusive to fictional worlds:

> In some measure, people already accept that language creates reality. They know that writers create. They know that saying 'Done' may create a contract, and

[310] Gaiman, *Anansi Boys*, 90.
[311] Coupe, *Myth*, 4.
[312] Novels like *Circe* by Madeline Miller (2018) deal directly with the substance of classical mythology to imagine the experiences of the sorceress Circe, daughter of Helios and Hecate. Works like George R.R. Martin's *A Game of Thrones* (2011) and others in the *Song of Ice and Fire* series construct complex mythical histories which involve multiple religions, mythologies, and legends to justify and alter the behaviour of characters and reinforce their differences. Salman Rushdie's magic realist novel *The Satanic Verses* (1998) plays on the tropes of Archangel and Devil to stylise the opposing stories of redemption and destruction of Farishta and Chamcha. The novel is also famous for its highly controversial revision of the life of the Islamic Prophet Muhammad.
[313] Andrew Von Hendy, *The Modern Construction of Myth* (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2002), 2.

> saying 'I thee wed' may create a marriage… […] Your vocabulary shapes your world for you and enables you to get a grip on it. Conversely, the limits of your language are the limits of your world. All this, people know already. We add a further consideration: the end of the philosophers' dream, that the human mind could altogether outsoar the limits of language and history and lay hold of absolute speculative knowledge, is a great event. In religious thought it means giving up the attempt to transcend our myths and symbols, and returning into language.[314]

Cupitt states that language is powerful as a symbol, but it also enacts and alters our engagement with others and our engagement with reality. When connected with religion, myth and symbol are intrinsic to the authority and power of language. Eleazar Meletinsky says of creative language that:

> The act of creation can occur in a variety of contexts and in different forms that mytho-logic regards as particular instances of the same uninterrupted continuum. Even the creation of objects when the gods speak their names, which is relatively rare in archaic myths, is not creation from nothing but a type of spiritual emanation of the god that is based on the mythological equation between the object and its name.[315]

Here, he argues that in mythology, the creation of objects through naming (while rare) is fundamentally linked to divine power, and is therefore of the same stuff as other forms of creation.[316] His description of creation through vocalisation is reminiscent of a symbolic reading of language, in which the concept of the signified is embedded within the signifier. Because of the direct relationships within language as symbolic communication, the addition of the divine allows for the signifier to manifest the signified.[317]

---

[314] Don Cupitt, *Creation out of Nothing* (London: SCM Press, 1990) ix. Quoted in Coupe, *Myth,* 93.

[315] Meletinsky, *The Poetics of Myth*, 178.

[316] There is a similar effect in the Kingkiller Chronicle series, in which finding and speaking the true name of an element allows the speaker to manipulate that element. These names are not in the language of the fictional world, but in the secret language of nature – a divine language of being. In Rothfuss' *The Name of the Wind* (2008), Kvothe learns the name of the wind, which is an exceptionally rare and difficult element to learn the true name of. In this case, Kvothe's control of the wind is not mythopoeic voice, since he does not manifest the wind, nor does he alter the reality of the fictional world. Instead, he accesses a hidden power and uses – and abuses – the wind which already exists.

[317] The equation of word and concept is made literal in Tommy O'Haver's film *Ella Enchanted*, where Ella is cursed with obedience, and follows to the letter every direct order given. Her compulsion to obey is not limited by skill or physical ability; any lack on her part is supplemented by the magical authority of the curse so that she completely fulfills the word of the given directive.

Meletinsky's views are useful for mythopoeic voice, particularly as Spider's power comes directly from Anansi, the story-telling trickster god ("he'd say it in his god-voice, which would make whatever he said practically true").[318] The innate creative potency of language is easily transferred to the substance of mythopoeic literature. Within a fictional world, characters with a mythopoeic voice like Spider can use language to manifest or tweak their experiential reality. In their first acquaintance of each other, Fat Charlie and Spider are at a wine bar, toasting to their late father. Spider obtains an old, dusty bottle from the bar and proposes a toast:

> "To Dad," said Fat Charlie, and he clinked his glass against Spider's – managing, miraculously, not to spill any as he did so – and he tasted his wine. It was peculiarly bitter and herby, and salt. "What it this?"
>
> "Funeral wine, the kind you drink for gods. They haven't made it for a long time. It's seasoned with bitter aloes and rosemary, and with the tears of brokenhearted virgins."
>
> "And the sell it in a Fleet Street wine bar?" Fat Charlie picked up the bottle, but the label was too faded and dusty to read. "Never heard of it."
>
> "These old places have the good stuff, if you ask for it," said Spider. "Or maybe I just think they do."[319]

This event is Fat Charlie's first experience of Spider's powerful voice, which in this case is focused on a particularly symbolic beverage. Initially, the mythic aspect of this excerpt seem to the evoking the common mythological trope of divine or magical beverages. In the Greek tradition, for example the human Psyche drinks ambrosia, which enables her to join Cupid as a god on Olympus.[320] In Norse mythology, the mead of poetry confers the ability of a skald (court poet),[321] and its power is suggested in *American Gods* as Wednesday insists that Shadow imbibes mead to seal his divine deal: "I brought you mead to drink because it's traditional. And right now we need all the tradition we can get. It seals our bargain."[322] The trope of power-inducing drink is so prevalent in mythology that it appears renatured in mythopoeic novels like *The Lord of the Rings*, in which the hobbits Merry and Pippin drink Ent-draght, which makes them grow taller and more able to take on their

---

[318] Gaiman, *Anansi Boys*, 90.
[319] Gaiman, *Anansi Boys,* 74.
[320] Lucius Apuleius, *Cupid and Psyche*, ed. E.J. Kenney (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 115.
[321] Snorri Sturluson, "Skáldskaparmál," in Edda, trans. and ed. Anthony Faulkes (London: Everyman, 1995), 57.
[322] Gaiman, *American Gods,* 37.

tasks.[323] In each case, the drink is a catalyst or an enhancement which confers magical effects or abilities.

Spider manifests a mythically symbolic object through speech while he is in the wine bar with Fat Charlie. However, despite the prevalence of the power-inducing beverage within actual world mythology, the drink does not provide Spider with power within the fictional world. The referential concepts around the trope of powerful beverages is inverted. It is Spider's mythopoeic voice which creates the wine by generating a fictional mythic tradition in which the wine is a significant element. The drink itself holds no power other than as a token of the fictional mythological tradition constituted by Spider ("funeral wine, the kind you drink for gods."). Spider requests the wine ("these old places have the good stuff, if you ask for it") and it appears, even though it is nearly impossible that a contemporary wine bar would reasonably stock it. Although the tradition of funeral wine invokes trans-cultural traditions such libation, the ingredients of the drink sound like a parody of a mystical potion, as more practical ingredients like "bitter aloes and rosemary" are paired with "the tears of brokenhearted virgins."[324] Spider's mythopoeic voice is therefore dependent upon a series of fictionalised imaginings, and not the direct association of concept and object. First, he has a concept of ritualised drinks, including ideas of what a beverage of mythic importance would contain. Then he asks for it with confidence ("if you ask for it") and conviction ("or maybe I just think they do"), in so doing manifesting the drink precisely as he conceived of it. Finally, it appears, and he drinks with Fat Charlie. Spider internalises the mythic (and mythopoeic) trope of powerful beverages, constitutes a fictional self-referential conceptual network, and *then* creates the bottle by asking for it with a mythopoeic voice.

Cupitt and Meletinsky's ideas around mythological language are helpful in processing some aspects of mythopoeic voice within the fictional world. However, regarding mythopoeic voice as an exclusively linguistic function does fall short in Spider's case. The flexibility of fiction allows for looser mandates when altering or constituting aspects of the reality of the fictional world. Von Hendy acknowledges that there is a distinction between seeing myth as fiction, as a 'sibling' to the

---

[323] J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings* (London: HarperCollins, 2007), 471, 561.

[324] This passage does evoke the famous lines spoken by Ophelia in *Hamlet*: "There's rosemary, that's for remembrance. […] There's rue for you, and here's some for me." The memory of rosemary is relevant in the funeral wine poured out for Mr. Nancy, and rue is typically bitter. Aloe is bitter when eaten raw, and grows widely in the African continent, which makes it an ideal replacement for rue in a funeral wine for the Akan trickster god. This intertextual resonance is not further explored within the novel, making it unclear whether Spider made these choices having read a fictional world version of *Hamlet*, or whether they are plucked at random from another referential source in Spider's experience.
William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, edited by Ann Thompson and Taylor Neil (London: Arden Shakespeare, 2006) 4. 5. 200, 205.

ideological understanding of myth, than in myth as pragmatic or a prescriptive form. Von Hendy states that "'myth' is radicalized; its fictive nature presses into the foreground, and the basis of its perennial authenticity recedes to the vanishing point."[325] Where the "necessary fiction" of myth is prominent, "this conception of myth […] assum[es] that such fictions are without transcendental sanction. But it differs from its sibling in viewing neutrally, or even positively, their necessary fictivity."[326] He calls this a "constitutive"[327] view of myth, which he exemplifies with W.B. Yeats' poetry in *A Vision* that is attributed to communicators who spoke with him, dictating to him metaphors and "stylistic arrangements of experience."[328] Von Hendy points out that "the crucial point here isn't the precise degree of Yeats's belief, but his pragmatic commitment to a construction he knows to be obviously dubious."[329] The ideas of the mythic here are not ideological, sacred, or historical, but they are powerful because they are efficient in accessing power and authority. This conception of myth is a way in which creativity can make manifest a constructed form of fiction communication that contains the depth and authority of myth without claiming a specific mythological tradition. The constitutive elements of the fiction of myth is made literal in the novel and film *Inkheart,* where the main character Mo has the power of silvertongue.[330] Whatever he reads aloud becomes part of his reality: characters are 'read out' of the book and are free to wreak havoc on Mo's world. Mo's voice alone doesn't carry the power of manifestation, nor does the book itself. But Mo's powerful voice, combined with constitutive powers of fictionalised myth (the print in the books themselves), manifests an alteration within the reality of the fictional world.

In the world of *Anansi Boys*, the need for such a modified view of myth is evidenced by Spider's ability not only to manifest objects but also space, altering limited pockets of the fictional world as it is described by the reality conditions experienced by (non-divine) characters.[331] He does this by narrativising his ideas. After making Fat Charlie's acquaintance, Spider moves himself into Fat Charlie's spare room, which he describes as "might have been a good sized bedroom for a

---

[325] Von Hendy, *The Modern Construction of Myth*, 304.
[326] Von Hendy, *The Modern Construction of Myth*, 304-5.
[327] Von Hendy, *The Modern Construction of Myth*, 305.
[328] W.B. Yeats, *A Vision* (New York: Macmillan, 1966) 8, 25. Quoted in Von Hendy, *The Modern Construction of Myth*, 305.
[329] Von Hendy, *The Modern Construction of Myth*, 305.
[330] Cornelia Funke, *Inkheart,* translated by Anthea Bell (Frome: Chicken House, 2003). *Inkheart*, directed by Iain Softley (New Line Cinema, 2008), film.
[331] These changes to the reality of the fictional world are limited in scope, and are reversible. Spider cannot fundamentally alter the reality conditions of the fictional world in its entirety. Mythopoeic voice, as an inherently personal effect for the relevant character, is not omnipotent, unlike divine constitution.

normal-sized garden gnome or an undersized dwarf, but for anyone else it was a closet with a window."[332] However, after Spider moves in:

> There was a room, yes; that much as still true, but it was an enormous room. A magnificent room. There were windows at the far end, huge picture windows, looking out over what appeared to be a waterfall. Beyond the waterfall, the tropical sun was low on the horizon, and it burnished everything in its golden light. […] And there was more…[333]

Spider's mythopoeic voice has fundamentally altered the reality of the box room he occupies without altering the reality conditions of the world itself, and without altering anything other than what he directly speaks into being (the dimensions of the rest of Fat Charlie's apartment are unchanged, for example). The room is now not only large enough to hold the few boxes and trinkets it previously housed, but a vast indoor space, which looks out onto an even more vast outdoor space. The literary form allows the reader to experience the broadening shock of Fat Charlie's view of the box room. Consecutively increasing spatial signifiers mimic Fat Charlie's gaze as "a room" becomes "an enormous room. A magnificent room." Windows become "huge picture windows," and there arises a massive outdoor space in where there "appeared to be a waterfall." After noting the waterfall, Fat Charlie notes that there is further space "beyond the waterfall" which extends into "the tropical sun […] low on the horizon". Within the tiny indoor space of the box room, there is an outdoor space and a horizon, implying a continuing depth. Fat Charlie's sequential recounting of the space and substance of Spider's guest room mirrors the process through which Spider's desire became a bottle of wine, and exposes the narrative constitution which manifested the room to begin with.

Spider's mythopoeic voice mirrors the poetics of mythopoeic literature, playing on the symbolic properties of language, mythological tropes, and constitution through fictive narrativisation. Unlike myth and mythopoeic literature, mythopoeic voice does not fundamentally alter the reality conditions of the fictional world. Mythopoeic voice relates to Pavel's "salient ontologies" model which is derived from his framework of possible worlds (see Part One, page 36).[334] To recall his position, Pavel argues that "we may distinguish between primary and secondary universes within dual structures, the former constituting the foundation upon which the latter is

[332] Gaiman, *Anansi Boys*, 122.
[333] Gaiman, *Anansi Boys*, 123.
[334] Pavel, *Fictional Worlds*, 54.

built."[335] This model is helpful with respect to mythopoeic voice in that it establishes the connectivity between the fictional world and the mythopoeic reality. Spider pushes against the laws of reality in the fictional world, but he does not fundamentally alter them. In an amendment to Pavel's structure, mythopoeic voice would more accurately be called a distention of the primary universe rather than a secondary universe. For small instances, like the bottle of funeral wine, Spider does not need to terminate the act of constitution which manifested the wine in the first place. The liquid was drunk, and the bottle could be disposed of and allowed to cease to exist. In the case of his guest room, however, Spider "concentrated on letting the bedroom stop existing, which is something that he hated to do, mostly because he was incredibly proud of his sound system, and also because it was where he kept his stuff."[336] Spider is "letting" the room disappear, and allowing the reality of the fictional world to re-establish its shape before Spider's manipulation.

Mythopoeic voice also differs from myth and its associated supernatural authority in its immediacy. As Meletinsky points out, the power of myth relates to 'proto-time,' a "mythical past" which is "not only a remote epoch but is the time of primordial creation, the proto-time (Ur-*zeit*), the time of all origin – all are valid descriptions – that existed before empirical time. In fact, myth marks the sacred time of origin and not the empirical time as special."[337] This proto-time is tied with a proto-space in *Anansi Boys*, which are caves at the end of the world: "There are mountains. They are the rocky places you will reach before you come to the cliffs that border the end of the world, and there are caves in those mountains, deep caves that were inhabited long before the first men walked the earth. They are inhabited still."[338] In these caves live the god-animals who make up traditional Anansi stories. These gods have always lived there – they "were inhabited long before the first men" – and always will: "they are inhabited still". When this space is discussed in the novel, it is as if it exists in an eternal present. This is a space that Spider cannot change, because it is part of the mythology of the fictional world. At the conclusion of the novel, Fat Charlie discovers that he also has a mythopoeic voice. Using this ability, Spider and Fat Charlie can move in and out of the caves at the end of the world, and even succeed in transforming Grahame Coates, their ex-boss and the novel's villain, into a stoat. They trapped this stoat in Tiger's cave at the end of the world, as a punishment for his misdeeds. The brothers succeeded in changing a human into a stoat, and even succeeded in satirizing Tiger's roar: "Charlie did the goofy roar again. Like any impersonation, like any perfect caricature, it had the effect of making what it made fun of intrinsically ridiculous. No

[335] Pavel, *Fictional Worlds,* 57.
[336] Gaiman, *Anansi Boys*, 221.
[337] Meletinsky, *The Poetics of Myth*, 159.
[338] Gaiman, *Anansi Boys,* 83-84.

one would ever hear Tiger roar again without hearing Charlie's roar underneath it."[339] What the boys cannot change is the proto-time in the proto-space which belongs to myth proper within the fictional world. Because of the limitations of mythopoeic voice, it is fundamentally distinct from the mythic and mythologies within fiction and mythopoeic texts. Mythopoeic voice distends reality, but cannot fundamentally alter it, or change the supernatural mythologies which are at work in the fictional world.

As with *American Gods*, the resonances of actual world mythology can lose some of its mythical dimension within the fictional world. The mythic and the mundane can co-exist in the same reality, despite the inability of some to perceive its totality, resulting in a perpetual state of hesitation which is so prevalent it can form one of the reality conditions of the fictional world. Expanding on these views of myth established in *American Gods*, mythopoeic voice, evidenced in *Anansi Boys,* presses against the limitations of the reality of a fictional world. The power of mythopoeic voice works upon the symbolic properties of language, utilises the powerful aspects of mythology (including its tropes and archetypes), and proceeds to constitute a distended pocket of reality by narrativising a fictional mythological tradition without occupying the place of literary myth.

[339] Gaiman, *Anansi Boys*, 369.

Chapter Four: Taking Their Own Sweet Time – A Child's Experience in *Cronos, The Devil's Backbone,* and *Pan's Labyrinth*

The three films by Guillermo del Toro discussed in this chapter each manifest fictional world time in different ways. Like the other texts discussed in this thesis, they are chosen for the complexity they bring to fictional world-centric readings. In each case, they present intricate temporalities which obfuscate the distinction between the actual world, narration, and fictional world. In *Cronos* (1993), Aurora's self-assured stillness contradicts the rapid passage of time as it is measured with respect to the adults around her. In *The Devil's Backbone* (2001), the ghost Santi manifests a trichotomy of time which seem to contain the past, present, and future. As other children draw closer to him, their own behaviour begins to reflect his unusual temporality as they live through the trauma of war. Finally, in *Pan's Labyrinth* (2006), Ofelia uses her mythopoeic voice to escape to a mythic reality. Her misunderstanding of this mythic world results in time slipping away from her, leading to her death.

Each of the below discussions will take as their point of departure the theories of time discussed in Part One. The theories of Henri Bergson, Gilles Deleuze, Gregory Currie, Sarah Cardwell, and Matilda Mroz will be used as a framework within which to investigate how time is manifested within the fictional world. I will also consider in each case how the viewer can evaluate a character's experience of time as distinct from our own.

In the Nick of Time – Aurora's Calmness in *Cronos*

Cronos is a Mexican horror film following the life and death of Jesús Gris. Jesús is an Argentinian antiques dealer living in Mexico City with his wife and granddaughter, Aurora. He discovers a strange and ancient clockwork mechanism which pierces his skin, feeding the insect within and starting Jesús on the path to becoming a vampire. Jesús becomes known to the dying Dieter de la Guardia and his nephew Angel, who had been searching for the mechanism (named the cronos device) to give Dieter eternal life. Eventually, Jesús and Aurora kill Angel and Dieter, but not before Jesús nearly completes his transformation into a vampire. He makes the decision to die rather than drink Aurora's blood and become fully immortal. *Cronos* was del Toro's first feature length film, one which set the stage for transnational successes. The fictional world is itself transnational. The

characters are from diverse backgrounds: Aurora is Mexican, Jesús Gris is Argentinian, and the de la Guardias are Americans who are bilingual in Spanish and English. The environment establishes a transnational culture, hinted at by signage in Spanish, English, and Chinese. Conversely, the events of *Cronos* take place in a relatively small neighbourhood. As a result, Jesús and Aurora find themselves at a crossroads between the transnational and the local. This transnational culture is mirrored in its textual realities: Federico Luppi, who plays Jesús, is Argentinian and Spanish, Ron Perlman (Angel) is American, and Claudio Brook (Dieter) is Mexican. The production crew is predominantly Mexican (including del Toro himself, cinematographer Guillermo Navarro and composer Javier Álvarez) as are the production companies (which includes CNCAIMC, Fondo de Fomento a la Calidad Cinematográfica, and IMCINE).

This transnational character of the film's fictional and actual worlds is prevalent in critical responses to the film, which deal with questions of national identity,[340] urbanity and globalisation,[341] and neo-colonialism.[342] While these approaches are not explicitly helpful in a fictional world-centric project, they do frame a discussion on time which proves a useful backdrop against which Aurora's temporality can be read. Deborah Shaw ties the transnational identity of the film to the temporal disorientation that surrounds the concept of the vampire, metaphorically contained within the cronos device.[343] She links the representation of vampirism in the film with history of Spanish colonialism in Mexico and modern US neo-colonialism, stating that "ideas of alchemy, immortality, and vampires provide the narrative mysteries and fantastic pleasures of the text, but ultimately the elixir or life is an unwelcome substance linked to insects, colonisers, addiction and possession."[344] The cronos device, developed by European alchemists and coveted by resident Americans, therefore becomes a cultural metaphor for globalisation, and a political metaphor for Mexican-American relations.[345] It becomes an amalgam of destruction (related to *Cronos,* the Greek titan who ate his children) and time (as *Chronos*, the personification of time). Shaw points out that the device is a clockwork mechanism and that its rhythmic ticking sound is

---

[340] Geoffrey Kantaris, "Cinema and Urbanías: Translocal Identities in Contemporary American Film," *Bulletin of Latin American Research*, 25.4.
[341] Geoffrey Kantaris, "Between Dolls, Vampires, and Cyborgs: Recursive Bodies in Mexican Urban Cinema," 1998, accessed June 9, 2018, www.latin-american.cam.ac.uk/culture/vampires.
[342] Deborah Shaw, *The Three Amigos: The Transnational Filmmaking of Guillermo del Toro, Alejandro González Iñárritu, and Alfonso Cuarón,* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013).
John Kraniauskas, "*Cronos* and the Political Economy of Vampirism: Notes on a Historical Constellation." *Cannibalism and the Colonial World*. Ed. Francis Barker, Peter Hulme, and Margaret Iversen. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 143.
[343] Shaw, *The Three Amigos*, 24.
[344] Shaw, *The Three Amigos*, 26.
[345] Shaw, *The Three Amigos*, 20.

prevalent throughout the film, binding together eternal life (endless time, Chronos) and death (vampirism, Cronos). The unity of Chronos and Cronos is therefore a comment "on the devastation that follows when humans try to manipulate the workings of time and interfere with its laws."[346] For Shaw, therefore, the connection between the two, between destruction and time, is inherently transnational, represented in Jesús' 'possession' by a foreign object which nearly forces him to consume his granddaughter.

John Kraniauskas takes a similar position, arguing that vampire narratives like *Cronos* are "first and foremost narratives of the social configuration of the body" in which the return of the 'dead' body is the 'return' of the postcolonial scenario through neo-colonial American capitalism.[347] He goes on to write that "*Cronos* is a fantasy of the contemporary body, technology, and of time in the accelerated age of late-transnational-capitalism," in which capitalism is a parasite which feeds off Mexican nationhood just as the Cronos device feeds off of Jesús' life force.[348] Shaw and Kraniauskas thus read time in *Cronos* as embodied in the vampire. In these readings, the embodiment of time as vampire has spatial, political, and cultural meaning, derived from the transnationality of the film and its subject matter. These approaches clearly prioritise the reality of the actual world, but they also appropriately identify the importance of time within the fictional world. They identify Jesús and the vampire as points of temporal disruption, creatures who have the representational "capacity to join all spaces, places and times."[349] They also recognize that the transnational nature of the film, linking the fictional world and the text – can itself be related to the figure of the vampire.

Jesús moves in a predictable way through the fictional world, his behaviour reflective of chronological time as it is measured by the countless clocks in his antique shop. When his vampirism alters his relationship to time, his temporality continues to be chronological. When he is physically connected to the Cronos device, its cogs run backwards, but keep time as they do so.[350] Instead of halting Jesús' experience of time by imbuing him with immortality, the device reverses itself, measuring time backwards. He appears younger, healthier, and more energetic (figures 30 and 31), eschewing his reading glasses and moustache. After his first death, the Cronos device once again

[346] Shaw, *The Three Amigos*, 28.
[347] Kraniauskas, "*Cronos* and the Political Economy of Vampirism," 143.
[348] Kraniauskas, "*Cronos* and the Political Economy of Vampirism," 144.
[349] Ann Davies, "Guillermo del Toro's Cronos: the Vampire as Embodied Heterotopia," *Quarterly Review of Film and Video* 25, no. 2 (2008): 396.
[350] Shaw, *The Three Amigos*, 26.

runs forward, effectively capturing him in a chronological loop.[351] After his first death, he appears to his family dressed in a tattered backwards tuxedo (his attempt to wear the funeral tuxedo in which he was to be embalmed and which had been slit up the back). In life, when he moved forward through time, he had a composed and calm demeanor and appearance. Subjected to this time loop, Jesús is unable to orient himself, and so becomes increasingly manic and dishevelled. As the Cronos device once again runs forward in time, he begins to show physical signs of decrepitude which parallel his previous juvenescence. His skin tatters and sloughs off (figure 32), marking his body's transformation into vampire form.

Figure 30 – Jesús as an elderly grandfather

Figure 31 – Jesús grows youthful

Figure 32 – Jesús' skin sloughs away

Aurora manifests a very different durational experience of time. As I noted in my discussion of Henri Bergson in Part One, duration is "the real, concrete, live present […]. What I call 'my present' has one foot in my past and another in my future."[352] It is the subjective experience of the passage of time, distinct from chronological time, since it cannot be measured, and is inconsistent in pace.[353] Gilles Deleuze argues that time in film is similarly dependent on the sensory-motor experience of duration as movement through space.[354] These two approaches are components of

[351] Films like Coppola's *Bram Stoker's Dracula* (1992) have a similar temporal effect on the vampire figure. Dracula becomes increasingly youthful as he drinks Jonathan Harker's blood. He is eventually transformed from a crooked, white old man into a tall dark young man who is so attractive he is able to seduce Nina Harker.

[352] To refer back, you can find discussions of Bergson, Deleuze and Currie in Part One, pages 40-42. Bergson, *Key Writings,* 155.

[353] Bergson, *Key Writings,* 107-8.

[354] Deleuze, *Cinema 2*, 79.

Gregory Currie's view of time in film, in which time unfolds as "temporal relations between constitutive elements of the work."[355]

Aurora's durational temporality, her unfolding present, is achieved in part because she is a child. In her study *The Child in Film,* Karen Lury takes as her primary position that children in films made for adult audiences are fundamentally different from the adult: "the child and childhood, and indeed children themselves, occupy a situation in which they are 'other': other to the supposedly rational, civilised, 'grown up' human animal that is the adult."[356] She quotes Owain Jones, noting that "otherness […] is a more subtle idea of the knowable and the unknowable, the familiar and the strange, the close and the distance, being co-present in adult-child relations."[357] Jessica Balanzategui argues a similar position: "it is largely through the child's perceived *lack* of reason, socialization, and social constructedness that it is defined and established as the adult's binary opposite, and is positioned as a pivotal cultural other."[358] The child is an adult "work in progress," and as such the opposite of the grown adult.[359] Unlike Santi in *The Devil's Backbone* in the next section, Aurora is not supernatural or uncanny. She is a counterpoint for the adults around her, but not precisely in the ways argued by Balanzategui. Angel and Dieter – and particularly Jesús – are driven by emotion and desperation into an irrational frenzy. Jesús is buffeted by his chronological reversals, intoxicated by the Cronos device and the advance of time. In contrast, Aurora is distinguished from the adults by her calm, rational reaction to the events around her. She acts with stillness and slowness, as if her experience of passing time is out of phase with the pace of those around her, with the measured counting of clockwork, and the forward momentum of the narrative.

---

[355] Currie, *Image and Mind,* 93.

[356] Karen Lury, *The Child in Film: Tears, Fears and Fairy Tales*, (London: I.B. Tauris, 2010), 1.

[357] Owain Jones, "'True geography [ ] quickly forgotten, giving away to an adult-imagined universe.': Approaching the Otherness of Childhood," *Children's Geographies* 6, no. 2 (May 2008): 197. Quoted in Lury, *The Child in Film*, 2.

[358] Jessica Balanzategui, *The Uncanny Child in Transnational Cinema: Ghosts of Futurity at the Turn of the Twenty-first Century* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2018), 10.

[359] Balanzategui, *The Uncanny Child in Transnational Cinema*, 14.
The child as an incomplete adult and therefore at the mercy of time is evident with Claudia, a young girl turned into a vampire after the death of her mother in Neil Jordan's *Interview with the Vampire* (1994). While her body remains young and beautiful, Claudia's mind grows into that of a narcissistic woman, causing a direct conflict between her embodied experience of time passing and her durational experience of immortality. Without her body or mortality to measure time, Claudia becomes increasingly restless and violent in her frustration at her eternally childish body. She is doomed to be a "work in progress" forever, until she commits crimes which result in her execution.

Currie argues that the temporality of art is negotiated between "constitutive elements of the work".[360] In the case of *Cronos,* this negotiation emphasises the temporal distinction between Aurora and Jesús. This dichotomy is at its most overt when they infiltrate Dieter's living space in order to find the missing information about the Cronos device. Upon entering Dieter's room Jesús immediately goes to a writing desk and begins rifling through its contents. The scene is presented in a medium shot with a soundtrack of sustained strings and low key lighting (figure 33, 1:08:54), thus maintaining tension and momentum without instigating increased pace. Jesús' hunched stance gives an impression that the moment is a fleeting one, his uncomfortable posture telegraphing an intention to move locations. At this point, the camera gently dollies back and pans left, showing Aurora walking forward through the room, clutching her teddy bear, her posture and composure a stark contrast to Jesús' (figure 34, 1:09:17). She moves calmly and deliberately, placing one foot in front of the other, touching nothing. The restive camera moves about her, but she maintains her measured pace. Echoing the mood set by Jesús, the camera focuses on the strange contents of the room, losing interest in Aurora and allowing her to walk out of shot (figure 35, 1:09:26). She approaches a set of drawers in front of Dieter's bed, reaches forward, and touches it. The first drawer she opens contains a steel box. Without hesitation, and in strong contrast to Jesús' rifling

Figure 33 – Jesús rifles through Dieter's desk

Figure 34 – Aurora wanders away from Jesús

Figure 35 – The camera loses Aurora

Figure 36 – Aurora retrieves Dieter's lockbox

[360] Currie, *Image and Mind,* 93.

hands, she calmly reaches in and pulls it out (figure 36, 1:09:41). Mirroring the earlier shot of Jesús, Aurora is now shown in a medium shot, with the same sustained string soundtrack. Despite the tension and momentum of the narrative, she takes the box and moves towards her grandfather in the same slow, calm pace. Once again, the camera allows her to move out of shot (figure 37, 1:09:45). It centers on the quick, sharp movements of Dieter climbing out of his bed as he confronts Jesús. Aurora stands silently in the background, the embodiment of an opposing movement-time. The men stand and sit, rise and stoop, and move about the room. Their restlessly shifting bodies create the impression of time passing rapidly in a bodily Deleuzian way.[361] The narration matches their tense momentum, as strings increase their rhythm, moving from long bowing to tremolo, and the camera begins to alternate between increasingly close shots of Dieter and Jesús. The men sink to on the floor, struggling to control Dieter's knife and the cronos device. Behind Dieter, Aurora slowly approaches his ivory-handled cane lying on the ground and circles around behind him, maintaining the same measured pace. As Dieter struggles to overcome Jesús, Aurora calmly prepares to strike, all but forgotten by the camera that is distracted by the frenzy of the fighting men. She hovers out of focus and in the background at the bottom left of the frame (figure 38, 1:14:07). She strikes out at Dieter and knocks him unconscious (figure 39, 1:14:10); her face expressionless, she gently lowers the cane to the ground on the follow-through of her swing, the slowness of her movements belying the suddenness of her blow.

Figure 37 – The camera ignores Aurora

Figure 38 – Aurora readies her strike

Figure 39 – Aurora's expressionless follow-through

Throughout this scene, Aurora's actions are at odds with the narration and with the camera itself. After her strike, the camera takes a second to pull her into focus, giving the impression that it had not anticipated her act and the soundtrack maintains its earlier tension. The camera reverses,

[361] Deleuze, *Cinema 2*, 79.

placing all three figures together in a full shot. Aurora stands completely still, sinking into her hip and resting her hands gently on the top of the cane as she watches Jesús struggle awkwardly to his feet (figure 40, 1:14:26). Nineteen seconds have elapsed in the course of this struggle sequence; nineteen seconds, experienced differently by Jesús, Dieter and the narration, and by Aurora.

Figure 40 – Aurora is completely at ease

The two struggling men thus exist within a shared temporal experience; the 'fast' time of which is evidenced by their frenzy, with frequent changes in posture (stooping, sitting, standing, kneeling, lying) and action (rifling, walking, grabbing, stabbing, defending, wrestling, crawling, clubbing, reeling).[362] Their time unfolds, to use Currie's conceptualisation, by "representing time by means of time," emphasising the flux of their durational experience, echoing it in the relatively brief timeframe of the narration within the scope of chronological film time.[363] Their fast temporality is the temporality of the film itself, as the narrative sweeps forward at the same pace, actively mirroring speed and momentum in camera and soundtrack. In comparison, Aurora's slowness seems almost alien. Her durational experience, evidenced by her behaviour in relation to the other constituents of the fictional world and in relation to the narration, is entirely different. Her pace is slow, her actions deliberate, and she remains completely motionless when not actively pursuing a goal. Her calmness means that on several occasions, the camera simply moves on without her or allows her to exit the frame (figures 35 and 37), in order to keep pace with the events of the plot.

This distance in experienced time between Aurora and the narration does not mean that she experiences a different chronology. All three characters – and the camera – experienced the passing of nineteen seconds between Aurora grabbing Dieter's cane and watching Jesús stand. Her temporal dislocation from the narration does, however, indicate that the narration and the narrative does not represent her lived experience of the fictional world.

[362] Mroz, *Temporality and Film Analysis,* 4.
Mroz on temporality is discussed in Part One, pages 42 and 43.
[363] Currie, *Image and Mind,* 103.

Stopping Dead – Time and the Uncanny Child in *The Devil's Backbone*

Aurora's temporality in *Cronos* points to the experience of duration by characters within fictional worlds, as evidenced by the difference in her manifested temporality from that of other characters and the narration of the film itself. In *The Devil's Backbone* Santi engages with duration and narrative in a more interventionist way. Santi's temporality, like Aurora's, is markedly different from other characters within the fictional world of the film. Unlike Aurora, however, his temporality directly affects time as it is experienced by other characters.

The Devil's Backbone takes place in an orphanage in a remote location in Spain, set during the Spanish Civil War (between 1936 and 1939). Run by the Argentinian expatriate Dr. Casares and the headmistress Carmen, this orphanage supports the children of republicans, teaching them to think for themselves and to act collectively. The young Carlos is brought to the orphanage where he encounters Santi, the ghost of a young boy murdered in the orphanage's cellar. Despite his initial fear, Carlos becomes familiar with Santi, learning about his death at the hands of Jacinto, a former occupant of the orphanage. Influenced by the violence of the conflict beyond the orphanage's walls, Jacinto learns that Carmen is hiding treasure. He destroys the orphanage and murders Carmen, Dr. Casares, and many of the young boys living there. Working together, the surviving boys lure Jacinto to the cellar, where the ghost of Santi pulls him down to his death in the cistern. The film ends as the surviving boys leave the orphanage and set out into the Spanish desert.

Santi is a ghostly child, a horrific figure for characters and audience alike. *The Devil's Backbone* is not the first film to trade on the inherent horrors of the (un)dead child. After the production of hallmark films in America from the 1960s through the 1980s such as *Rosemary's Baby* (Roman Polanski, 1968), *The Exorcist* (William Friedkin 1973), T*he Omen* (Richard Donner 1976), *The Shining* (Stanley Kubrick 1980), and *Poltergeist* (Tobe Hooper 1982), the child has come to occupy an important place in contemporary horror movies. In the following decades, the horrific child has become a generic marker in world cinema, with films such such as *Ringu* (Hideo Nakata, 1998) and *Ju-On* (Takashi Shimizu, 2000) from Japan, and *Låt den rätte komma in* (Tomas Alfredson, 2008) in Sweden. These (un)dead children are in large part horrifying because of their uncanny signification. Sigmund Freud identifies uncanniness as "that class of the terrifying which leads back to something long known to us, once very familiar."[364] "Once very familiar" encapsulates the sensation of the uncanny by illuminating the tension between the safety and comfort of the familiar

[364] Freud, "The Uncanny," 76.

and the alienating awareness that that safety and comfort has the potential to be lost or taken away. Freud articulates this tension in the German words *heimlich* (the "'familiar'; 'native', 'belonging to the home,'"[365] or concealed[366]) and its opposite *unheimlich* (the "untrustworthy," "uneasy," and "bloodcurdling,"[367] and "'everything that ought to have remained hidden and secret and has become visible'"[368]). The *unheimlich* also carries the meanings of *heimlich* within it, being its direct opposition (the prefix *un*-). In the above films, as in *The Devil's Backbone*, the familiar becomes a site of alienation and danger. In *The Exorcist*, Regan's exorcism and terrifying manifestations happen in her bed, a place which should be safe and comforting. In *Poltergeist,* the haunting first starts when the child Carol Anne (the centre of the haunting) watches static on the family television set and a ghostly hand emerges. In *Ringu*, the well in which Sadako's murdered body was disposed of is concealed underneath the cabin where she lived, which in turn becomes a murder site because of Sadako's psionic fury. In *The Devil's Backbone*, Santi haunts the dormitories and the kitchens, both traditionally homely safe spaces. Carlos uncovers aspects of Santi's story while in the dormitory, and the cistern where Jacinto disposed of Santi's body is beneath the kitchens.

The uncanny child as a figure of horror is not only linked to physical inversions of the homely, familiar, or rightfully concealed. The uncanny child, and especially the (un)dead child, is the essence of Freud's general definition of the uncanny as "something long known to us, once very familiar."[369] According to Balanzategui, the child is essentially an adult "work in progress."[370] Conversely, the child is also an inherently nostalgic figure, an aspect of the adult's earlier self: "while being a subject of the present external to adult consciousness, the child is also something every adult once was, and is thus bound to teleological linear narratives of the adult self as the adult's origins and past history."[371] The (un)dead child is therefore the disruption of the fundamental linkage between child and adult, having died before his or her full adult identity could be reached. This disruption between adult (future) and child (past) is the uncanniness common among all (un)dead children in horror films. The experience of the ghostly, the uncanny and the distress of the adult child is conducive to deconstruction and psychoanalytic criticism, which provides several interesting perspectives in this area, of which Balanzategui's is one. However, such approaches are

[365] Freud, "The Uncanny," 76.
[366] Freud, "The Uncanny," 78.
[367] Freud, "The Uncanny," 78.
[368] Freud, "the Uncanny," 78.
[369] Freud, "The Uncanny," 76.
[370] Balanzategui, *The Uncanny Child in Transnational Cinema*, 14.
[371] Balanzategui, *The Uncanny Child in Transnational Cinema*, 13.

of limited use in fictional-world centric readings. They are typically oriented to the responses of the reader, and the physical markers of internal processes (such as those which are the focus of psychoanalysis) are difficult to pinpoint when looking at the experiences of characters, and so I will leave this to other scholars.[372] This not to say, however, that I will be turning away entirely from the concept of the uncanny, since Santi is manifestly uncanny within the fictional world, and from the perspective of other characters. I will be turning to Santi as a child ghost and temporal anomaly within the fictional world of *The Devil's Backbone*.

Santi is a ghost. He is locked within the eternal instant of his death, with blood constantly streaming upward from his head and particles of dirt floating upwards past him as if he were still sinking through the water of the cistern (figure 41). At the same time, he engages with Carlos as though they were experiencing time passing at the same rate; Santi is somehow able to find Carlos specifically when he is alone, and wherever he is inside the orphanage. Santi's simultaneous experience of past (his eternal sinking) and present (his ability to distinguish specific points in time and space) is blended with that of the future. Santi warns Carlos that "many of you will die," a foretelling which proves true when only seven boys survive to walk out into the desert.[373] According to Balanzategui, "cinematic uncanny children continually puncture linear continuity" by breaching "aesthetic practices that buttress such linearity," and therefore "immerse viewers and adult characters into a dimension in which […] 'time is out of joint.'"[374] Narratives in films like *Ju-On: The Grudge* (Takashi Shimizu, 2002) are scrambled, with non-linear narratives breaking down narrative coherence until the viewer is as disoriented and unsettled as the characters. However, these uncanny and disorienting narratives do not reconstitute themselves on the level of the fictional world, where the uncanny child does not undermine the chronological progression of events. Instead, within the fictional world, the temporal anomalies associated with these uncanny (un)dead children are manifested in a more physical way which, while unable to affect the chronology of events, exert pressure on the durational experience of the characters around them, both adult and child.

Figure 41 – Santi's eternal present

[372] Balanzategui, *The Uncanny Child in Transnational Cinema.*
Colin Davis, *Haunted Subjects: Deconstruction, Psychoanalysis and the Return of the Dead* (Basingstoke: Palmgrave MacMillan, 2007).
Jaques Derrida, *Spectres of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning, and the New International*, trans. Peggy Kamuf (London: Routledge, 1994).
[373] *The Devil's Backbone,* 00:28:18.
[374] Jessica Balanzategui, *The Uncanny Child in Transnational Cinema*, 26.

Santi's temporal anomalies are not unique to him, and frequently manifest in similar child horror films as non-linear narratives and as physical character traits. As Karen Lury points out, temporal anomalies are physicalized in *Dark Water* (Hideo Nakata, 2002) and *The Locker* (Kei Horie, 2004); the children don't grow, and the "unnatural *lack* of growth on the part of the child is contrasted with the perversely *excessive* growth of dark hair."[375] Santi, like Mitsuko (*Dark Water*) and the little girl from *The Locker*, is a temporal paradox, his ever-bleeding head embodying an eternal past moment while engaging with both the present and the future of other characters within the fictional world. Like Aurora in *Cronos*, Santi seems at all times unhurried, yet consistently keeps pace with the other characters. Aurora's aberrant temporality enforces a distinction between herself and the other characters (her stillness contrasts sharply with everyone else's frantic behaviour), as well as between herself and the narrative (as when the camera seems to lose patience and move on without her). At first glance, Santi also seems to occupy the same still temporality as Aurora. Trapped in an eternally present experience of a past moment, Santi is often critically compared to the unexploded bomb which dominates the centre of the courtyard in the orphanage. The opening scene of the film shows a bomb being dropped on the orphanage from an overflying plane, which happens at the same fictional-world moment (though Santi's murder is shown after the bombing in the narrative) as Santi's murder and disposal in the cistern. The bomb did not explode when hitting the ground, and remained in the centre of the courtyard thereafter. Carlos is told upon his arrival at the orphanage that the bomb has been deactivated by the army, and so is dead and therefore safe. And yet, when Carlos knocks on its casing, he hears a groaning in response, and later hears a faint ticking sound coming from inside it. The groaning and ticking, like the clockwork mechanisms in *Cronos*, drive narrative time forward, constructing the ideological foundation for a narrative potential future.

The bomb in the courtyard gives substance to the political and personal stasis of war that is disrupts the lives of all of the characters. As Christopher Hartney phrases it, the "imposing unexploded bomb […] evokes an extremely strong sense of the uncanny throughout the entire film," impaling the very centre of the orphanage with the visual and tangible violence of the Civil War.[376] The Civil War, manifested in the bomb, leads to characters who "no longer seem in control of the environment in which they seek to find their home[,] for feelings of the uncanny can ultimately make us homeless in our own home. In this way the unexploded bomb becomes a symbol

[375] Lury, *The Child in Film*, 39.
[376] Christopher Hartney, "With Spain in our Hearts: The Political Fantastic of Guillermo del Toro's *Laberinto del fauno* (2003) and *El Espinazo del diablo* (2001)," *Literature and Aesthetics* 19, no. 2 (2009): 192.

for Spain in its unhomely civil slaughter."[377] Although Hartney intends these statements to reflect our actual-world engagement with the historical realities of the Spanish Civil War,[378] the bomb, like Santi, seems to inspire the same uncanny and destabilized state in the characters who inhabit the orphanage. The orphanage is filled with boys who have lost family members in the war, and each adult is similarly affected, either by greed (Jacinto and his cronies) or by distress and isolation (Dr. Casares and Carmen). The bomb is a constant presence in the orphanage, reminding the characters of their endangered and ultimately temporary existence within the building. This is related to Jacques Derrida's notion of the 'fabulous textuality of nuclear war, which "has never occurred, itself; it is a non-event" which can therefore only be "the signified referent, never the real referent (or present or past) of a discourse or of a text. At least today apparently."[379] The bomb in the orphanage, while not nuclear, occupies the same space of having never occurred; it is the exact physical form of the "non-event." While Derrida takes a deconstructive approach which is different to the fictional world-centric one I am taking, he usefully draws attention to the fact that the fictionalised concepts around something like a bomb or nuclear war can occupy a multiplicity of moments. The bomb represents an unresolved past in the incomplete bombing and a static present, having been officially disarmed. It is also an indeterminate future: despite its supposed disarmament, Carlos can still hear it groan and tick, an ominous manifestation of its aggressive potentiality.

In many ways, Santi shares a temporal centre with the bomb, his murder having occurred simultaneously with the bombing of the orphanage within the fictional world. They even share a physical resonance; the bomb has coloured ribbons tied to its fin which blow in the wind and resemble the constant flow of blood streaming upward from Santi's forehead wound.[380] They both embody a tripartite temporal position of past, present, and future, and they both do so in a way which seems to inspire an uncanny *frisson* in other characters. However, Santi and the bomb are in many ways temporally distinct, particularly when it comes to their influence within the fictional world beyond their physical resonances. The bomb anchors a tripartite catastrophic potentiality: it fell in the past and did not explode, it may (and does not) explode in the present, and it might explode in the future (but not while the orphanage is occupied by anyone to experience it, since the film ends with the bomb unexploded and the last remaining boys walking into the desert). For the same reasons, the bomb is also a null temporality, an unresolved stasis. In contrast, Santi's

[377] Christopher Hartney, "With Spain in our Hearts," 193.
[378] See the following section on *Pan's Labyrinth* for more on this subject.
[379] Derrida, "No Apocalypse, Not Now (Full Speed Ahead, Seven Missiles, Seven Missives)," 23.
[380] Antonio Lázaro-Reboll, *Spanish Horror Film*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012), 266.

tripartite temporality is active, and exerts a temporal influence over the other characters as they draw closer to him spatially and emotionally.

The cistern below the orphanage's kitchen in *The Devil's Backbone* is the location of three major altercations. The first, which occurs before the diegetic time of the film, is when Jacinto murders Santi and disposes of his corpse in the cistern. The second involves Carlos being set upon by the older bully Jaime and two smaller boys. This sequence undergoes significant variation in pace, demonstrating the power of Santi's aberrant temporality. It begins with an attack, and features four major movements, demonstrated by figures 42 through 45 below. It begins with Carlos crouched by the cistern, still and calm, riffling the water with his hand and attempting to speak to Santi (figure 42). By establishing a physical connection with the water, he forges first contact with Santi and his temporality. One of the smaller boys slowly draws up behind Carlos and grabs him, spinning him around to face Jamie and another boy (figure 43). Separated from the water, the boys move quickly and intuitively. Carlos struggles, and the jagged sound of his breathing almost overcomes Jamie's taunts as the older boy unfolds a pocket knife, initiating a crescendo of movement. Carlos is thrown to the ground, while the three assailants are clearly full of adrenaline, chests heaving, voices rising, and sweat standing on their faces, indicating that their experience of time will be quick and energetic. While on the ground, Carlos snatches an iron weight and throws it at Jaime, striking him in the face and causing him to fall backward into the cistern (figure 44). One of the boys shouts that Jaime can't swim, and so Carlos leaps to his feet and jumps into the cistern (figure 45), seemingly without thinking. The entire attack scene elapses in thirty seconds (00:36:06-00:36:35).

Figure 42 – Carlos greets Santi in the stillness

Figure 43 – Carlos is suddenly attacked

Figure 44 – Carlos knocks Jaime back

Figure 45 – Carlos leaps into action to save Jaime

The pace of the scene nearly halts and all diegetic sound stops (except the occasional gentle sound of rising bubbles) as Carlos enters the water where Santi died. Although Santi's aberrant temporality has not yet been widely felt in the disjointed world of the orphanage, the cistern is saturated with his influence. This rescue scene is in three movements, divided as in the three figures below (figures 46-48). In the first, Carlos swims downward, slowly searching in all directions, hampered by the viscosity of the water, physically slowed by being fully immersed in Santi's element. Carlos' search is punctuated by shots of Jaime underwater, physically mirroring Santi's eternal final moment drowning in the cistern: blood flows gently upward from a wound on the left of his forehead, and particles in the dirty water gently flow upward past him (figure 46). Jaime is unconscious, and gently floats downward in stark opposition to his earlier adrenaline-fueled attack on Carlos. Unable to find him, Carlos breaks the surface for air and the scene crashes back into its previous frantic tempo (figure 47). The sound of bubbling and splashing water is almost as loud as Carlos' desperate gasps, and the two remaining boys shout directions to him. The keyed-up space outside of the water is established by contrasting sounds and fast movements, and is jarring when juxtaposed with Santi's muffled and arrested cistern world. A few ragged breaths, and Carlos dives again, submerging in the cistern. He finds Jaime and drags him slowly to the surface as Santi looks on from below (figure 48). In all, the rescue sequence takes forty seconds (00:36:35-00:37:15), with only three of it spent above water. Compared with the action-packed thirty seconds of the attack, the underwater world seems to be entirely in slow motion. Underwater, the boys are powerless against Santi's influence. Despite the driven chaos above water, Carlos is forced to slow to the same deliberate pace with which Santi moves through the halls of the orphanage.

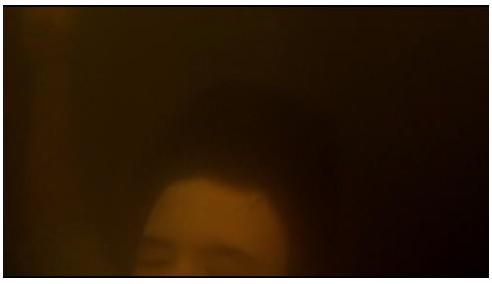

Figure 46 – Jacinto mirrors Santi

Figure 47 – Carlos gasps as he breaks the surface

Figure 48 – Santi looks on

This altercation at the cistern resonates across the film as events and as narrative form. Carlos' crouched position from figure 42 directly mirrors a young Jacinto's posture immediately after murdering Santi (figure 49); both boys, dressed in similar clothing crouch in the same spot next to the edge of the cistern. Although the lighting differs (Carlos's experience takes place during the day and Jacinto's at night), their physical position in the centre of the frame creates a formal resonance which draws attention to the fictional world similarities between the occasions. Santi's position and movements while drowning (figure 50) resonate with those of Jaime in figure 46. Set in the same murky cistern, the shots are both deep amber. They boys both fall gently downward, with faces are upturned and dark hair floating wild. The blood flows upward from the wounds on the upper left forehead, and the camera follows their downward descent, creating the impression that the boys are suspended in the viscous water rather than sinking.

Figure 49 – Jacinto watches Santi sink

Figure 50 – Santi sinks in the cistern

The voice-over narration from the beginning and end of the film asks "what is a ghost? A tragedy condemned to repeat itself time and again? […] Like an insect trapped in amber." The similarities between figures 42 and 49, as well as between figures 46 and 50, seem to resonate with this idea, a single moment or concept trapped within the fabric of the narrative which then repeats itself again and again. From a contextual or historical perspective, these resonances are a comment on the unfortunate cyclical nature of trauma and violence, as it is (broadly speaking) experienced by the child in historical recurrence of war (here represented by the Spanish Civil War). Anne E. Hardcastle effectively captures this doubled representation, stating that "the past invoked in the course of the film is double-coded: on one hand, for the characters, it is a specific instance of murder and betrayal; on the other, for the audience, it is a larger history of the national tragedy of Spain's 1936-1939 Civil War during which the film is set."[381] Karen Lury takes a similar position, stating that "one child's experience, or more accurately their presence as a small, emotive figure, can be used to 'stand in' for many deaths. In these instances, the child's narrative function is

[381] Anne E. Hardcastle, "Ghosts of the Past and Present: Hauntology and the Spanish Civil War in Guillermo del Toro's *The Devil's Backbone*," *Journal of the Fantastic in the Arts* 15, no. 2 (2005): 119.

effectively to act as a metonym for wider suffering."[382] In these perspectives, the resonances are comments on the perpetuating nature of violence and trauma.

The narrative and historical resonances between the two first altercations at the cistern belong to the audience. For the boys involved, as Hardcastle points out, the moment is intensely personal, "a specific instance of murder and betrayal."[383] The war is their reason for being in the orphanage, and exists within the courtyard (the bomb) and their social sphere (Jacinto's actions are reflective of the harsh realities beyond the orphanage), but does not figure directly in their fight. The fight at the cistern is instigated by first impressions, pranks, comic books and toys. The resonances between the first two altercations, then, are due to Santi. Colin Davis argues that the ghost is the embodiment of a secret, and this inherent mystery epitomises the ghost as a terrifying Other rather than a return of the past.[384] Effectively, then, the 'secret' of the ghost, its reason for being, becomes part of the act of haunting. Although, as remarked above, deconstructive and psychoanalytic approaches are of limited direct help in a fictional world analysis, in *The Devil's Backbone*, Santi's 'secret' is related to his temporality. His secret unfinished business is centred on the cistern: it is the place where he died, where the moment of his death is enacted (with Carlos and Jaime), and where it must inevitably come to an end.

Santi observes the events in and around the cistern, watching from below as demonstrated in figure 48. In this respect, Santi and the resonances around his death scene seems less representative of an Other than they do of an isolated and hurting child. He is not re-enacting his death scene or possessing others to do so (such as the episode "Waiting in the Wings" from the television show *Angel*).[385] Santi also does not compel others to do his bidding through haunting, like the ghosts from *A Christmas Carol.*[386] Santi does not seem to be orchestrating or controlling the altercation between Carlos and Jaime so much as he is observing it. I would suggest that it is Santi's temporal influence, rather than his spiritual presence, alienating Otherness, or ghostly influence, which is responsible for the resonances. The events and movements of the first two altercations do not perfectly echo each other. Instead it seems that the present of the fictional world is a palimpsest of the past, where the actions and movements of the present are distinct from the past, but are not free of Santi's subtle embodiment of it. Beyond the pace of actions and movements of the boys in the cellar, Santi's temporality therefore is also manifest within the

[382] Lury, *The Child in Film*, 107.
[383] Hardcastle, "Ghosts of the Past and Present," 119.
[384] Davis, *Haunted Subjects*, 13.
[385] "Waiting in the Wings," *Angel*, WB Network, February 4, 2002, television broadcast.
[386] Charles Dickens, *A Christmas Carol* (Peterborough, ON: Broadview Press, 2003).

fictional world as "a deformation of temporal linearity," not through anachronism but through temporal multiplicity.[387] Santi's aberrant tripartite temporality therefore acts upon the reality conditions of the fictional world, which operates on a linear and causal manifestation of time outside of Santi's sphere of influence. This sphere of influence acts around the reality conditions of the fictional world, seen in the impact it has on the behaviour and attitude of those who draw closest to him spatially and interpersonally without fundamentally distorting the reality of the fictional world.[388]

The final altercation at the cistern brings together the unidirectional progression of events as they are experienced by other characters and expressed through the linear chronological narrative, with the culmination of Santi's tripartite temporal influence. The sequence begins immediately after Jacinto destroys the orphanage and kills all but seven boys in his pursuit of Carmen's gold. Despite his victory, Jacinto's hands shake while he shoves gold bars into his pockets and ties them into a handkerchief and onto his belt. His tremor speaks to the intensification of sensory experiences through time, evoking Anne Rutherford's statement that one "is not jolted into fleeting moments of awareness and sensation, and time here is not the passing of this intense, fleeting experience of the ephemeral moment, not its undoing, but the intensification of the experience through duration."[389] Although Rutherford is speaking to the viewer's experience intensifying as cinematic time elapses, this sensorial resonance is equally effective on the level of the fictional world. Physical sensation, including chemical and emotive responses, can therefore be linked to the experience of time and the way in which that temporal experience manifests within the fictional world. Temporal dilations based on physical response is most commonly seen in slasher horrors like *I Know What You Did Last Summer* (Gillespie 1997), in which the walking assailant is able to keep pace with the frenzied running victim. Although sometimes considered an illogical generic quirk of slasher films, within the fictional world, such instances take on temporal relevance.

---

[387] Peter Buse and Andrew Stott, eds., *Ghosts: Deconstruction, Psychoanalysis, History* (Houndsmills: Macmillan Press, 1999), 1. Quoted in
Balanzategui, *The Uncanny Child in Transnational Cinema*, 18.

[388] Unlike ghosts, the presence of the mythic and the power of mythopoeic voice can result in such distortions, explored with reference to *American Gods* and *Anansi Boys* in Chapter Three, and in the next section on *Pan's Labyrinth*.

[389] Anne Rutherford, "Precarious Boundaries: Affect, Mise-en-scene and the Senses in Angelopoulos' Balkans Epic," *Senses of Cinema* 31 (2004), http://sensesofcinema.com/2004/feature-articles/angelopoulos_balkan_epic/.
Originally printed in the collection Richard Candida Smith ed., *Art and the Performance of Memory: Sounds and Gestures of Recollection*, Memory and narrative (New York: Routledge, 2002).
Quoted in
Mroz, *Temporality and Film Analysis*, 32.

Although the chronological passage of time relative to distance travelled is identical (the killer keeps pace with his victim), the victim's frantic movements, screams, and ragged breath speak to the experience of extreme panic and fear, leading to the dilation of time. The victim seems to be moving faster, but although their experience would seem longer, it has the same chronological trajectory as a calm and controlled person walking. Critically reading temporal dilation in relation to the physical and sensorial realities of characters within the fictional world is directly manifested by Jacinto and the seven surviving boys in the orphanage. Like the boys' ragged breathing, heaving chests, and sweaty faces in the second altercation at the cistern, Jacinto's frantic and excited movements, his hands faintly shaking with adrenaline, establish a similar temporal position to the running slasher victim.

Jacinto is distracted from his gold as Jaime and Carlos appear in the hallway, and call him "*hijo de puta*" (which translates to "son of a bitch"), before turning and leading him at a run down the stairs towards the cistern. In an inversion of the above mentioned slasher tradition, the fleeing boys appear calm, while Jacinto chasing them moves with intense speed, leaping over rubble where the boys calmly dodge it (figure 51). The boys run down the stairs barely ahead of the older and larger Jacinto, seen as a shadow on the stairs in figure 52. And yet in the next shot the camera reverses, showing the boys disappearing into the depths of the cellar, well ahead of Jacinto (figure 53). In the cellar, the boys stand still as Jacinto walks into their trap, easily spear him with their sharpened sticks (despite his loaded gun), and calmly herd him (at a walking pace) to the cistern (figure 54) where he falls in. Once in the cistern, dragged down by the stolen gold, Santi slowly

Figure 51 – Jacinto dashes through the rubble

Figure 52 – Jacinto's shadow follows Jaime

Figure 53 – The boys gain distance from Jacinto

Figure 54 – Jacinto's frenzy in an ambush

makes his way over to Jacinto's form, where he embraces him as Jacinto drowns (figure 55).[390] The boys, through proximity to Santi, are able to capture and defeat Jacinto with their education and their mastery of the slow durational present.[391] In his final moments, Jacinto is plunged into the cistern, the heart of Santi's past-present-future trichotomy, mirroring Santi's moment of death and Jaime's fall as his dark hair floats upward (figure 56), mingling with drifting blood, his screams muffled and drawn out by the water.

Figure 55 – Jacinto is slowly herded to the cistern

Figure 56 – Jacinto drowns in Santi's embrace

Ultimately, in *The Devil's Backbone*, temporality is not, as Deleuze argues, "spli[t] in two dissymmetrical jets, one of which makes all the present pass on, while the other preserves all past."[392] Instead, Santi's uncanny self as an (un)dead child realises a tripartite temporality, which influences those around him for good or for ill. Santi's temporality is related to the realities of the war being waged within the fictional world, his traumatic fallout being bound in time to the undetonated bomb in the courtyard. Indirectly, Santi's past-present-future becomes part of the experience of time for those who are closest to him, freeing them from their own trauma, experienced within the walls of the orphanage at Jacinto's hands. In the next section, I will be exploring another film directed by Guillermo del Toro, also set during the Spanish Civil War, in another look at the temporality of children in the fictional world.

[390] This frame is murky, but Santi's form can be seen on the lower right, partially obscured by the floating blood.
[391] Earlier in the film, the boys are taught about Ice Age hunting techniques, in which humans would work together to bring down a woolly mammoth with nothing but strategy and sharpened sticks.
[392] Deleuze, *Cinema 2*, 79.

Once Upon a Time, Ofelia Used Mythopoeic Voice in *Pan's Labyrinth*

Both *The Devil's Backbone* and *Pan's Labyrinth* are set during the Spanish Civil War. Although a strictly historical approach is not conducive to a fictional world-centric reading, scholarship regarding texts which look back onto this historical setting (including *The Devil's Backbone* and *Pan's Labyrinth*) is well-developed and influential. For this reason, I will briefly look at the impact of the Spanish Civil War and its resonances post-1975. The Spanish Civil War lasted from 1936 to 1939, pitting the country against itself as the fascist General Francisco Franco led National and Falangist forces to take control of the country. By the end of the war, Franco held power, and ruled a fascist regime over Spain until 1975. After Franco's death in 1975, the country started its tumultuous path back to democracy, bolstered by the Pact of Forgetting. According to Omar G. Encarnación, this Pact was an informal institution,

> An agreement negotiated by the major political parties at the time of democratic transition, relegat[ing] the political crimes of the dictatorship […] to the ash heap of history. Accordingly, there would be no political trials for anyone associated with the Franco regime.[393]

This Pact of Forgetting responded to the horror and trauma of the war on a personal scale as well as the political one. Surviving generations limited their first-person accounts, some of which were "not conveyed from generation to generation with the pride associated with great deeds, but with shame and fear."[394] The informal political and interpersonal institution of forgetting left a significant gap in the national consciousness, which contemporary texts are emerging to fill. These texts, what Paloma Aguilar Hernanadez calls *postmemory* texts, and Teresa Vilarós calls *neo-memory* texts, allow new generations to distance themselves from the shame of the war torn decades but which also address a need felt for individual and national historical identity.[395]

---

[393] Omar G. Encarnación, "Peculiar but not Unique: Spain's Politics of Forgetting," *Aportes* 32, no. 94 (2017): 150.

[394] Paloma Aguilar Hernandez, *Memory and Amnesia: The Role in the Spanish Civil War in the Transition to Democracy*, trans. Mark Oakley, (Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2008), 140.

[395] Teresa M. Vilarós, "The Novel Beyond Modernity," in *The Cambridge Companion to the Spanish Novel*, eds. Harriet Turner and Adelaida López de Martínez (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 154. Hernandez, *Memory and Amnesia,* 140.
Along with *The Devil's Backbone* and *Pan's Labyrinth*, many literary and filmic postmemory texts have emerged around the Spanish Civil War. Some examples include Dulce Chacon's novel *The Sleeping Voice* (2006)*,* and the films *Painless* (Medina 2012) and *While at War* (Amenábar 2019)*.* Although postmemory texts are retrospective, many texts originating from the period of the Civil War heavily influence the aesthetics and content of many postmemory texts. One of the most influential films of this time is Victor

Pan's Labyrinth and *The Devil's Backbone* are such texts, and this approach to reading is highly influential in the critical response to both films. These approaches, dealing with the important themes of trauma,[396] memory,[397] and political identity which make postmemory texts so important.[398] Many of these areas are found within the fictional world: Ofelia escapes into the world of fairy tales to escape her traumatic treatment at the hands of Capitán Vidal, and Santi is memory and vengeance embodied in response to his own traumatic experience. However, the concepts around postmemory do not necessarily belong to the fictional world. While the characters are dealing with trauma and political turmoil, their experience is present. The text exists as part of an important intertextual, political and historical network around postmemory within the actual world. Within the fictional world, the child is experiencing time passing, and not time as it has already passed as a historical moment. In addition, following on the principles of individual and independent fictional worlds (discussed in Part One, pages 12-20), it cannot be said that the war experienced by Ofelia, Santi, and the other characters in either film is the same Spanish Civil War that occurred in our world despite their similarities. The events and states of affairs around Ofelia did not occur in the actual world, and so actual world history is not definitive with respect to events of the fictional world. In the rest of this section, I will focus on time and temporality in the fictional world, and so I will look specifically at the ways in which Ofelia's mythopoeic voice distends her experience of the fictional world.

Erice's *El espíritu de la colemna* (*Spirit of the Beehive,* 1973) whose legacy of the wide-eyed child protagonist and its doubled world structure can be seen in *Pan's Labyrinth*. Postmemory texts are not exclusive to the Spanish Civil War, although the politics and subsequent Law of Historical Memory (enacted in 2007) makes postmemory and forgetting an essential consideration in these types of Spanish texts.

[396] Adam Lowenstein, *Shocking Representation: Historical Trauma, National Cinema and the Modern Horror Film*, (Columbia: Columbia University Press, 2005), 1-9. Quoted in
Antonio Lázaro-Reboll, *Spanish Horror Film*, 2012, 262.
Donald Haase, "Children, War, and the Imaginative Space of Fairy Tales." *The Lion and the Unicorn* 24, no. 3 (2000): 360-377.
T.S. Miller, "The Two Kings and the Two Labyrinths: Escaping Escapism in Henson's *Labyrinth* and Del Toro's *Labyrinth*," *Extrapolation* 52, no. 1 (2011): 26-50.
Lury, *The Child in Film*, 105-145.

[397] Ann Davies, *Spanish Spaces: Landscape, Space and Place in Contemporary Spanish Culture* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2012), 22.
Dolores Tierney, "Transnational Political Horror in *Cronos* (1993), *El Espinazo del Diablo* (2001), and *El Laberinto del Fauno* (2006)," in *The Transnational Fantasies of Guillermo del Toro,* Ann Davies et al, eds., 161-182 (New York: Palgrave, Macmillan U.S, 2014).

[398] Lázaro-Reboll, *Spanish Horror Film*, 259.
Tierney, "Transnational Political Horror in *Cronos* (1993), *El Espinazo del Diablo* (2001), and *El Laberinto del Fauno* (2006)," 169-172.
Hartney, "With Spain in our Hearts, 200.
Shaw, *The Three Amigos*, 68, 70, 80.

Pan's Labyrinth is a temporally complex film. It has three distinct time streams. The fictional world temporality is one which consistently engages all of the characters in the film. It is the time of the mill, where Ofelia and her pregnant mother Carmen arrive to live with her new father and fascist leader, Capitán Vidal. This is also the temporal locus of the Republican rebels who are based in the woods just beyond the mill, and with whom the housekeeper Mercedes and the mill's doctor are secretly affiliated. This strand is marked by chronological time. Vidal is obsessed with his father's pocket watch, and images of cogs fill the space of the mill. The second temporal strand is that of the mythological realm. This one is a non-chronological temporality, much like that of mythology, discussed above in Chapter Three, or a child's story. It includes Princess Moanna, the royal daughter of the king and queen of the immortal underground kingdom. She escaped to the surface world, where she died and was reincarnated as Ofelia. Princess Moanna's task is now to find her way back home. The final temporality is Ofelia's alone. In this temporality, Ofelia encounters a fairy and a magic faun. They tell her that she must complete three tasks in order to be returned to her position as the Princess Moanna, which are given to her by a magic book of fairy tales. Through mythopoeic voice, Ofelia manifests the creatures and places she reads in the book, but as a result, she alienates her mother, almost dies in the fulfilling of one of her magic tasks, and is asked by the faun to kill her baby brother. It is also in this strand that Ofelia dies, shot by her step father Vidal, only for Vidal to be shot and killed in his turn.

It is the first temporality which is the most linked to the historical context of Spain in 1944. As Davies cautions, there is the "danger into which critics sometimes also fall, of seeing the text merely as a veneer for Spanish history to the extent that they do not 'see' the text itself, so eager are they to disinter the history beneath."[399] Despite the title card of the film noting that the setting is "Spain, 1944," Davies correctly notes that the landscape of the fictional world is "devoid of Spanish specificity,"[400] and that the forest is featureless and isolationist,[401] cutting off the characters from the rest of the fictional world that lies beyond the forest. All of the characters are trapped in this featureless setting that could potentially be any boreal forest. Ofelia is trapped by her connection to her mother, Carmen is trapped inside her sick room, the Republicans are trapped in the band of forest just beyond sight of the mill, and Vidal himself is trapped by his duty (the act of slitting his own throat reflected in a shaving mirror shows that he wishes to escape like every other

[399] Ann Davies, *Spanish Spaces*, 2012, 22.
[400] Ann Davies, *Spanish Spaces*, 2012, 32.
This is also true with *The Spirit of the Beehive*. This classic Spanish film also deals with the conflicts of living under Franco's regime. It, too, uses a delocalised space to throw a young girl in to flux, forced to navigate the traumas of a violent world on her own.
[401] Ann Davies, *Spanish Spaces*, 2012, 25.

character does). These trees cut the characters off from the more generalised Spanish context, seeming to indicate a de-nationalising and internationalising of its critical relevance.[402] This indeterminacy helps the critical viewer to diffuse direct references of the film to the actual world Spain, while the title card gives a contextual reference for the viewer to anchor the events within the fictional world. The indeterminate landscape also traps the characters within the temporality of the fictional world. Vidal's obsession with his broken heirloom watch hints at his obsession with chronological time, which is mirrored in the implacable progression of hours as it is experienced in the fictional world. Days and nights roll one after the other, indistinguished from each other. Even the rebel Mercedes is caught in this temporal trap, making exactly the same motions in exactly the same way at exactly the same pace as she collects the illegal resources which she smuggles to her brother and the Republicans in the forest.[403]

The mythological temporality is opposed to the first in every way, even in its creation. Ofelia is the source of this world, speaking it into being through mythopoeic voice. To recall Chapter Three on *Anansi Boys*, mythopoeic voice is the process through which a character will speak aloud, and the contents of their speech becomes real within the world. Not only does the subject of their utterance become real, it appears to have its own mytho-logic, including its own mytho-temporality. Although the film starts with a title card and date which establishes a chronological anchor (Spain, 1944), after the introductory text the film's narration turns to a more mythic mode. A voice-over narration hints at this proto-time, opening the first sequence in the mythical world with: "a long [long] time ago, in the Underground Realm, where there are no lies or pain, there lived a princess who dreamt of the human world."[404] To recall Meletinsky from Chapter Three, myth is relative to a proto-time, which is "the time of all origin – all are valid descriptions – that existed before empirical time. In fact, myth marks the sacred time of origin and not the empirical time as special."[405] The voice-over narration therefore distinguishes between the 'specialness' of the

[402] Ann Davies, *Spanish Spaces*, 2012, 26.
[403] Guillermo del Toro, "Commentary," *Pan's Labyrinth* (Estudios Picasso, 2006), DVD.
[404] The English subtitles of the film (written by del Toro) read "a long time ago," whereas the Spanish original voice says "*Cuentan que hace mucho, mucho tiempo,"* which translates directly to "They tell that a long, long time ago" (translation my own). In the Spanish original, the introduction is a direct narrative invocation in the tradition of "once upon a time," and redoubles the word "long," in order to emphasise its proto-temporality.
[405] Meletinsky, *The Poetics of Myth*, 159.

historical moment denoted by the title card, and the "sacred time" of the myth which is utterly abstract.[406]

The phrase "a long time ago" from the opening scene is the fairy tale opening line which resonates as "once upon a time." While myth and fairy tale are distinct in form and content, as Jack Zipes points out, in many ways, "the fairy tale is myth. That is, the classical fairy tale has undergone a process of mythicization. Any fairy story in our society, if it sees to become natural and eternal, must become myth."[407] The time of this mythic fairy tale dimension is therefore depthless, and operates outside of chronology.[408] The temporal designation of the introduction is linked to the fairy tale tradition; Ofelia uses the phrase to begin the story she tells to her unborn brother later in the film. It is also linked to what Meletinsky calls the "proto-time" of the Underground Realm, which is "the time of all origin" for Ofelia's mythical world.[409]

This mythical fairy tale world becomes so powerful for Ofelia that it functions exactly as a mythological system would in our real world, affecting the thought processes and behaviour of those who believe in it. Confronted with the traumatic reality of living with Capitán Vidal, Ofelia creates this fictional mythology based on the information that she gleans from her love of fairy tales.[410] When Ofelia (as the reincarnation of Moanna) is not engaging with this mythological world, the chronology does not move on without her. This is indicated by the voice-over's introduction of Moanna's father, who waits in the Underground Realm for her soul to return "in another body, in another place, at another time. And he would wait for her, until he drew his last breath, until the world stopped turning…" Time in this space is without end, but simply exits in a perpetual state of stillness, waiting either for Moanna to return, or "until the world stopped turning." This embedded mystical reality is what causes most critics to consider the film to be magic realist or (in the case of Lukasiewicz) neorealist. Lukasiewicz' classification of this temporal space as neorealist is particularly interesting. She distinguishes it from magic realism; magic realism incorporates the

---

[406] Although voice-over narration and filmic narration, discussed in Chapter One, are not part of the fictional world, they are tools which a critical reader can use to learn facts about the fictional world or against which the reality of the fictional world can be gauged.

[407] Jack Zipes, "Fairy Tale as Myth/Myth as Fairy Tale," *Children's Literature Association Quarterly* (1987): 107.

[408] Haase, "Children, War, and the Imaginative Space of Fairy Tales," 361, 362.

[409] Meletinsky, *The Poetics of Myth*, 159.

[410] A similar effect occurs in Taika Waititi's *JoJo Rabbit* (2019), in which a young boy is so taken by the propaganda about Adolf Hitler that he imagines Hitler is his imaginary friend. As JoJo is confronted the realities of the world around him, primarily through conversing with a young Jewish girl who is hiding in his house, his relationship with his best friend Hitler sours. Eventually, JoJo is forced to acknowledge that the storybook world he imagined based on Nazi propaganda is false, in time to see his hometown fall to the Allied forces.

supernatural seamlessly into the fictional world (the primary fictional world).[411] Instead, no one but Ofelia recognises the supernatural or magical at work.[412] Although I disagree with Lukasiewicz' classification on the grounds that Ofelia's mythopoeic voice distinguishes the supernatural from the fictional world, her point is a good one. This world is one of opposition and one which demands reclassification, distinct from the primary fictional world. The distended temporality and complete lack of chronology in this mythic world of Ofelia's own creation places it in a resistant position in relation to the fictional world.

The third temporality is Ofelia's own. This temporality takes place in the fictional world, but is modified by elements of the mythological fairy tale world. Miller calls this "an audacious effort to connect the fantastic mode with a higher function for narrative as the only means by which to order and reorder human existence."[413] If this is so, Ofelia's experience of this time stream should not only be ordered and in her control, but should help her to contextualise and escape the trauma of the fictional world. Instead, Ofelia experiences this temporality in relation to the stimulus of the world around her rather than her own needs. When she is with her mother, the cycle of days and nights becomes routine and predictable. When she is engaging with her mythopoeic world, the measured temporality of the fictional world distorts through its proximity to the timeless proto-time of the Underground Realm. This destabilisation may be due in part to Ofelia's misinterpretation of her mythic environment. She believes it is a fairy tale, inspired by the books she reads (and which her mother dismisses), and not a mythic dimension.[414] She behaves as if she believes that, as the child protagonist, she will be all right, convinced that "even as fairy tales ultimately debunk magical thinking, showing that it works only in the realm of story, they also affirm the magical power embedded in language, the way that the ability to use words can grant a form of agency unknown to the child who has not yet fully developed the capacity to use language."[415] While Ofelia's language influences her reality, she fails to note that it is mythic – and dangerous –

---

[411] Tracie D. Lukasiewicz, "The Parallelism of the Fantastic and the Real: Guillermo de Toro's *Pan's Labyrinth* and Neomagical Realism," in *Fairy Tale Films: Visions of Ambiguity* (Colorado: University Press of Colorado, 2010), 62, 66.

[412] Lukasiewicz, "The Parallelism of the Fantastic and the Real," 66.

[413] Miller, "The Two Kings and the Two Labyrinths," 29.

[414] Ofelia's rigid point of view echoes the classic novel *Don Quixote*, in which Don Quixote's mythopoeic world is informed by the romances he reads obsessively. Although most scholars mark Don Quixote as mad, I believe that, within the fictional world, the Don is manifesting his own perceptual reality. In his failure to realise the limitations of his new reality – in that it is real for him and not for anyone else – he suffers great physical and social trauma. This includes tilting at giants, only to be forcefully 'attacked' by the sails of the windmill that everyone else sees.
Cervantes, *Don Quixote*.

[415] Maria Tatar, "Why Fairy Tales Matter: The Performative and the Transformative," *Western Folklore* 69, no. 1 (Winter 2010): 57.

and not magic. This is particularly evident when she crawls into the fig tree to complete the first task of retrieving a key from the stomach of a giant toad.

The episode of the toad seems typical of a fairy tale, which begins by entering the forest. As Ofelia first walks into the forest (figure 57, 0:31:56), she is prettily dressed, the afternoon sun shining golden and hopeful. She has no need to be distrustful that any negative effects will come as a consequence of her task, since the forest is a place which in fairy tales is traditionally where children "lose and find themselves. It is there that they gain a sense of what is to be done. […] No one ever gains power over the forest, but the forest possesses the power to change lives and alter destinies. In many ways it is the supreme authority on earth and often the great provider."[416] It therefore stands that in a fairy tale, deliverance and succor will come from saving a great tree of the forest. However, Ofelia soon discovers that the forest is not "the great provider." When she crawls into the decaying fig tree, it is mid-afternoon in the fictional world, with the sun past its zenith, denoted by the slanting sunlight. She is in the tree for seven minutes, yet when she emerges, it is evening (the blue filter representing dusk), she has missed her dinner, and her special dress is destroyed (figure 58, 0:38:14).[417] Her engagement with the disorienting temporality of the mythopoeic world has come into contact with that of the real world, throwing Ofelia into the wrong temporal experience.

Figure 57 – Ofelia's magical forest

Figure 58 – Ofelia loses time in the fig tree

[416] Jack Zipes, "The Enchanted Forest of the Brother Grimm: New Modes of Approaching the Grimm's Fairy Tales," *Germanic Review* 62, no. 2 (Spring 1987): 66.

[417] When Ofelia emerges from the fig tree, she is covered in mud and her lovely dress is completely destroyed. Karen Lury argues that mud has "both a terrifying and absorbing just-is-ness; demonstrating what is exposed, what is left, when the world is turned upside down, when the fragile civilisation that the child has barely understood has broken down. The contact with inanimate matter enhances the visceral, bodily sense in which the child has been 'thrown' into an encounter with the world." Lury's argument is significant in the consideration of Ofelia as a postmemory figure, and also as a disruptive figure in her own fictional world. Lury's view of mud is relevant in connection to the death of Artax in the Swamp of Sadness in Wolfgang Peterson's *The NeverEnding Story* (1984), in which the swamp mud overcomes Atreyu, metaphorically and literally soiling his quest with sadness.
Lury, *The Child in Film,* 133.

The disjuncture between Ofelia's experience of time and time passing in the fictional world is evidenced by a cross-cut to Capitán Vidal riding into the mountains to pursue the Republicans. The thundering of the fascist soldiers through the forest contrasts Ofelia's magical view of the fictional world. Ofelia believes that her mythopoeic voice has fundamentally altered the reality conditions of the fictional world to make it like a fairy tale. According to Jack Zipes, in a fairy tale, "the forest is rarely enchanted, though enchantment takes place there. The forest *allows* for enchantment and disenchantment, for it is the place where society's conventions no longer hold true. It is the source of natural right, thus the starting place where social wrongs can be righted."[418] In this forest, however, the "social wrong" of the fascist presence is not only not righted, but is enforced and advanced, the soldiers hunting and eradicating the Republican rebels. This sequence elapses entirely in the mid-afternoon (figure 59, 0:33:23), matching the expected chronology of the fictional world as well as the elapsed film time. Although both Capitan Vidal and Ofelia durational experience seems to match the chronology of the fictional world (and the film's narration), Ofelia's chronological relationship to time warps. The distortion therefore does not originate in the reality of the fictional world, but in Ofelia's subjective reality in relation to her created mythopoeic realm, one she is not wary of because of her mistaken misidentification of mythopoeic manifestation as fairy tale.

Figure 59 – Capitán Vidal at mid-afternoon

Despite the distended temporality of Ofelia's experience, she continues to experience a duration which she mistakes for chronology. Her temporality seems to be rigid, even when she strays into the mythopoeic. Her nearly deadly trial of the Pale Man, for example, is timed with an hour glass, and her failure to make it back to the safety of her bedroom in time almost sees her cannibalised. It becomes clear, therefore, that although Ofelia is indirectly in command of the temporality resulting from her mythopoeic voice, she does not control or even influence her experience of time relative to herself. Perhaps the best example of this is the figure of the faun. He is a creature emergent from Ofelia's mythopoeic world, and gives her instructions on how to return to the underworld as Princess Moanna. It should be the case that the faun follows Ofelia's temporality and chronology, as her mythopoeic voice makes her his originator. However, the faun moves in an opposing chronology to Ofelia, as del Toro points out in his commentary on the *Pan's Labyrinth* DVD. When she first encounters him, he is very old and tremulous, covered in moss and

[418] Zipes, "The Enchanted Forest of the Brother Grimm," 67. Original emphasis.

nearly blind (figure 60). However, as the film progresses, the faun becomes younger and more spry (figure 61).[419] Not only is Ofelia not anchored to her psychic experience of non-measured time, she is not relative to the chronologies that intersect with her own. Instead of being a safe place for Ofelia, her own experiences of time become violent, oppositional, and dangerous.

Figure 60 – The old mossy faun

Figure 61 – The faun is youthful and spry

The fictional world does not resist the narrative as it appears on screen, and short of the unremarkable, internationalised spaces that Davies points out, the fictional world easily fulfils the expectations of an allegorical, political, historical reading, making the film an uncontroversial postmemory text.[420] To the viewer, Ofelia's magical world seems to fulfil the expectations of the fairy tale, including the utter timelessness of a fairy tale invocation, the presence of helpful fairies, the woodland setting, and even the cadence of three tasks.[421] The eternal present of the mythic dimension and the fluctuating temporality of Ofelia's experience does not conflict with the reality conditions of the fictional world. It does not interact at all with the fictional world. The narrative and the camera have little trouble keeping them distinct and in line with the linear checkerboard rhythm of the narrative by presenting them with a unified perspective.[422] This is established from the very outset of the film, with the title card "Spain, 1944," and is followed through with the expected context and historically linear chronology.

Immediately after the introductory text, Ofelia is presented dying. A zoom in on her eye shows the mythic realm, narratively shown as if it were inside her head, indicating its exclusivity in Ofelia's experience. The rigorous distinction between the subjective and objective realities is

[419] Del Toro, "Commentary".
[420] Davies, *Spanish Spaces*, 32.
[421] Donald Haase, "Children, War, and the Imaginative Space of Fairy Tales," 362.
Zipes, "The Enchanted Forest of the Brother Grimm," 66.
The number three often appears in fairy tales and fables, including Goldilocks and the Three Bears, and the three fairies in Disney's *Sleeping Beauty* (1959).
[422] Del Toro, "Commentary."
Lukasiewicz, "The Parallelism of the Fantastic and the Real, 68.

upheld on the levels of both temporality and chronology, as explored with relation to Ofelia and Capitán Vidal's experience in the forest during Ofelia's time in the fig tree. This neat demarcation fails, however, as Ofelia's experiences occupy a resistant temporality. Ofelia's experience of time is in a constant state of flux. Like Aurora in *Cronos,* Ofelia's experience of temporalities and chronologies does not match those of the characters around her (such as Vidal). Nor does it match her understanding of temporal reality (marked by the proto-time of the mythic realm). Instead of submitting to either temporality, Ofelia becomes actively resistant in all senses. In the example of the trial of the toad, Ofelia removes the green dress that her mother had made for her (figure 62, 0:32:23). The clear intention here is for her to engage with the toad, as her storybook instructed. Ofelia then planned to put her dress back on and attend dinner. This fails miserably. When Ofelia emerges from the tree, it is inexplicably night, and her dress had blown down into a pool of mud, ruining it (figure 63, 0:38:29). Her act of setting her dress aside, a small trial in controlling the world around her, is an utter failure.

Figure 62 – Ofelia carefully hangs her dress

Figure 63 – Ofelia clutches her ruined clothes

As the film continues, Ofelia struggles harder and harder against these disparate realities, but only succeeds in destabilising herself. She is helpless to change the temporalities so tightly controlled by the narrative and the proto-time of the mythic. Instead, Ofelia resists to the extent that her attempts become a matter of life and death. In the final scenes of the film, Ofelia's struggle comes to a critical point at the heart of the labyrinth, the location of the symbolic katabasis into the underworld.[423] Ofelia takes her brother to the centre of the labyrinth, as the faun requests. She knows that Vidal will try to follow her, to kill her and reclaim his son, so she drugs him with a sleeping tonic. With this action, she attempts to invert her and Vidal's experience of time, to disorient him and pull him into her unpredictably slow temporality, giving her the time to escape. As she runs through the labyrinth, it magically opens for her and closes behind her (figure 64, 1:44:41), giving Ofelia a shortcut into the heart of the labyrinth. Conversely, Vidal stumbles through, occasionally stopping and leaning against the walls to regain his equilibrium against the drug (figure

[423] Miller, "The Two Kings and the Two Labyrinths," 29.

65, 1:44:20).[424] Vidal's disorientation and Ofelia's supernatural assistance points to a disparity in time, where Ofelia can be expected to reach the heart of the labyrinth well before Vidal.

Figure 64 – The labyrinth clear a way for Ofelia

Figure 65 – Vidal stumbles, lost in the labyrinth

However, in the heart of the labyrinth, Vidal overtakes Ofelia, impervious to her attempts to influence his own experience of time. He shoots Ofelia, and takes back the baby. Throughout *Pan's Labyrinth*, Ofelia is constantly trying to escape, resisting the events and chronology of the fictional world. From the beginning of the film, the Princess Moanna escapes *from* the underground kingdom *to* the fictional world, moving from mythic time to the linear time of the rest of the fictional world.[425] Upon arriving at the mill, Ofelia attempts to escape the claustrophobic house, a domain dominated by Vidal and his obsession with his pocket watch. She flees from this regimented chronology and into the labyrinth, as if the distended time of her mythopoeic experiences dominates the passage of time in the rest of the fictional world. In death, she attempts to escape into the mythopoeic world as the reclaimed Princess Moanna. Her constant drive for escape manifests itself in part as a temporal resistance that hammers against the rules of the more consistent temporalities. Ofelia's acts of resistance and escape increasingly destabilise her, exacerbated by her inability to recognise the limitations of her own worldview. Ultimately, her inability to reconcile chronology and achronology in her own experience leads to her death.

The narrative of *Pan's Labyrinth* has no problems reconciling the two temporalities of the fictional world. They are clearly delineated visually: Ofelia's mythopoeic world is filmed with soft curves and bright, saturate jewel tones (figure 66, 1:50:21) and Vidal's world is full of harsh angles and greys (figure 67, 0:25:29).[426] The two experiential realities are further distinguished by the method of narration. Ofelia's mythopoeic world has voice-over narration and is ordered by Ofelia's magical book of stories. The fictional world is not so contained, its narration is more impersonal

[424] I have brightened the content of figures 64 and 65, in order to make their features more clear.
[425] Miller, "The Two Kings and the Two Labyrinths," 33, 34.
[426] Many films use narration to distinguish between experiential subjectivities. This difference can be opposing forms of reality, such as in *Pan's Labyrinth*, or they might be opposing perspectives on the same reality, such as in Tim Burton's *Edward Scissorhands* (1990). Edward's stone mansion is dismal and grey, despite being surrounded by vibrant topiary and gardens, evoking his loneliness and longing. Conversely Kim's suburban world is soft and full of contrasting colours.

and transparent.[427] On the level of the narrative, there is no fracture between the temporal experiences, distinguished as they are narratively, and being neatly organised within the linear chronology of the film. Instead, it is Ofelia's need to escape and her inability to contextualise her own experiences which results in temporal slippage, and ultimately, her death.

Cronos, The Devil's Backbone, and *Pan's Labyrinth* are all films whose narrative manifests a disjuncture between the durational and chronological experience of the fictional world. In each film, the figure of the child is the marker for this disjuncture. In *Cronos*, Aurora's individualistic temporality contrasts those of the characters around her, as well as that of the narrative. In *the Devil's Backbone*, Santi's ghostly temporality distorts the duration of characters as they draw closer to him. Finally, in *Pan's Labyrinth,* Ofelia struggles so hard to escape the reality conditions of the fictional world that she cannot reconcile the boundaries of her own experience, distorted by the influence of her mythopoeic voice.

Figure 66 – The mythic world is bright and curved

Figure 67 – Vidal's world is grey and stark

[427] George Wilson broadly describes transparency in film as narration in which "most of the shots in these movies are understood as providing the audience with 'objective' or intersubjectively accessible views of the fictional characters, actions, and situations depicted in the film," and that where such a film does not mean to be objective, "there is a reasonably clear marking of the fact that they are, in one of several different ways, 'subjective.'"
George Wilson, "Transparency and Twist in Narrative Fiction Film," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 64, no. 1 (2006), 81.

Conclusion

I have sought to respond in this thesis to the critical tensions between the reader and viewer's intuitive responses to the fictional worlds of literature and film and the critical and theoretical paradigms of academic analysis. Readers and viewers discuss characters as if we know them to be real; they refer to them by name and speculate about their subjective experiences. When we apply critical theory, this disappears; characters become series of names, narrative qualities, quantities, representative factors, and narrative utterances. From the perspective of the theoretical models discussed in this thesis, immersion in fiction, in particular empathetic responses to characters and events, become theoretical. Centering readings of film and literature in the fictional world makes it possible to understand that our point of entry into them is, rather, the most human part of ourselves: our understanding of what it is to be human.

I have set out a view of fictional worlds derived from the literary tradition of fictional world theory of Lubomír Dolezel, Thomas Pavel, and Marie-Laure Ryan, alongside possible world philosophers David Lewis and Ruth Ronen. In the process, I have come to the conclusion that fictional worlds are individuated and independent, both from each other and from the actual world. I have sought to describe the contents of these worlds, but have discovered that the kind of information we might use to address texts and narrations does not account for the relationships we establish with characters, that which I have argued here is the most important element of our understanding of fictional worlds. Characters live within the domains of their stories; their places and spaces become clear to readers and viewers and they come and go through them. They are the point at which a coherent reality is offered for our experience, a reality of which the text that appears to enclose them represents merely a glimpse.

As we have seen, however, fictional worlds, like the actual world, can present problems. Chuck Palahniuk's and David Fincher's *Fight Club* are unable to offer their readers or viewers solutions to the seemingly intractable question of unreliable narration. Alice Jeličková, Gregory Currie, Cornelia Klecker, and Lars Bernaerts offer useful approaches to this problem, but close readings of the novel and film provided here suggest that fictional worlds become coherent only when narration is made secondary. If we allow characters like Marla to become authenticating authorities within their own fictions, they can generate a consensus reality against which the narration has no sway. Whether delusional or consensual, characters are always reliable.

Critical approaches which prioritise the reality of the actual world – so dominant in academic textual studies – have proved obstructive to what I have argued here is a necessary

recognition of the central status of the fictional world in acts of criticism. With a text like *Solaris* which is situated across defining points of culture and history, it is easy to see why contextual approaches have preoccupied those who comment on it. Darko Suvin and Christine Cornea present an estranged model for reading science fiction that seems to account for the subjective experiences of characters like Kelvin in Lem's novel. Simonetta Salvestroni and Steven Dillon have linked the narrative form of Tarkosvky's film to readings in which the viewer's knowledge of the cinematic apparatus, or director, or the film's socio-political context are related directly to global political realities. Linda Hutcheon and Siobhan O'Flynn's critical model of adaptation encourages a reading of Soderbergh's *Solaris* as a palimsestuous synthesis of fictional worlds. But the close readings I provide here tease out the elusive realities that should be differentiated in every *Solaris*, and to which only an approach through fictional worlds is responsive. Certainly, aberrant fictional realities tested the approach I seek to offer here. Neil Gaiman's *American Gods* and *Anansi Boys* appear to undermine the coherence of their own fictional worlds in their exploration of myth and the mythic. Applying the work of Kathryn Hume, Eleazar M. Meletinsky, and Brian Attebery, I have argued that the mythic dimension of each fictional world is more a defining reality than an ideological delusion to be deconstructed. Although the fullness of their reality is beyond the consensus of 'human' characters like Shadow, Gaiman's American gods are real in terms of their own fictional world. As my discussions of Guillermo del Toro's films has shown, reading film and literature for fictional worlds make it possible to understand characters as fully and individually subjective. In *Cronos,* Aurora has a fictional world that is strikingly and minutely distinct from the actions of the adults around her; she lives in a subjective order of time utterly different from that of the clock which controls her grandfather. In *The Devil's Backbone*, Santi asserts a tripartite experience of the past, present, and future which provides a framework for the actions of the characters surrounding him. In contrast, Ofelia's mythopoeic voice eludes her control. Time slips away from her and she is lost to the proto-time of myth.

This thesis cannot provide an exhaustive study of the applications of the proposed methodology; indeed, it is not even a complete overview of the opportunities it offers for readings of the texts discussed here. There are significant omissions: in *Anansi Boys*, for instance, Fat Charlie and Spider are black Anglo-Caribbeans, but their race is never explicitly described.[428] In conjunction with critical theories of race, a fictional world-centric reading might begin to explore the ways in

[428] Gaiman deliberately flips the conventional critical assumptions that a 'default skin colour' in white: see his interview with Rachel Martin and Mike Pesca, "Neil Gaiman Takes Questions on *Anansi Boys*," *NPR,* June 9, 2008, npr.org/transcripts.

which fictional worlds can test and challenge racial assumptions in the actual world. Similarly, it provides opportunities to re-assess interdisciplinary questions of medium, relatively implicit here in my conjunction of literature and film. I have not, for instance, discussed graphic novels, a form which provides remarkable opportunities for further elaboration of the discussion of narrative and narration in Chapter One – the 'multiverse' structure of Marvel and DC, for instance, in which multiple story worlds are simultaneously present, or the open-world environments of video games, in which players are not bound by narrative control. My aim here has been to establish a theoretical basis on which reading for fictional worlds can take its place at the heart of the critical disciplines of literature and film, and to provide close readings that would demonstrate some of its advantages. I leave it to my readers to imagine the possible critical worlds of which such an approach could begin an exploration.

Bibliography

Abrahams, Roger D. *African Folktales.* London: The Folio Society, 2016.

Abramov, Naum. "Dialogue with Andrei Tarkovsky about Science-Fiction on the Screen." In *Andrei Tarkovsky: Interviews,* edited by John Gianvito, 32-37. Mississippi: University of Mississippi Press, 2006.

Altman, Rick. *Film/Genre*. London: BFI Publishing, 1999.

---. "A Semantic/Syntactic Approach to Film Genre." *Cinema Journal* 23, no. 2 (1984): 6-18.

Anderson, Emily R.. "Telling Stories: Unreliable Discourse, *Fight Club*, and the Cinematic Narrator." *Journal of Narrative Theory* 40, no. 1 (Winter 2010): 80-107.

Andrew, Dudley. "Adaptation." In *Concepts in Film Theory,* 28-37. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984.

Apuleius, Lucius. *Cupid and Psyche*. Edited by E.J. Kenney. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990.

Armitt, Lucie. *Theorising the Fantastic*. London: Arnold, 1996.

Attebery, Brian. *Stories About Stories: Fantasy and the Remaking of Myth.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014.

---. *Strategies of Fantasy.* Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1992.

Atwood, Margaret. *The Penelopiad*. Edinburgh: Canongate Books, 2008.

Austin, J.L. *Philosophical Papers*. Edited by J.O. Urmoson and G.J. Warnock. 2nd Edition. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970.

Azarello, Brian. *Wonder Woman: Blood*. New York: DC Comics, 2012.

Banks, Iain M. *Consider Phlebas*. London: Futura Publications, 1990.

Balanzategui, Jessica. *The Uncanny Child in Transnational Cinema*: *Ghosts of Futurity at the Turn of the Twenty-First Century*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2017.

Barthes, Roland. "The Face of Garbo." In *Mythologies*, translated by Annette Lavers, 56-76. London: Vintage, 1993.

---. *Mythologies*. Translated by Annette Lavers. London: Vintage, 1993.

Baudrillard, Jean. "Simulacra and Simulations." In *Jean Baudrillard, Selected Writings,* edited by Mark Poster, translated by Jacques Mourrain, 166-184. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988.

Beaumont, Mark. "Inside the Cult of Pixies: Why They're More than Just a Band." *NME.* September 2016. Accessed May 17, 2018. Nme.com/features/inside-the-cult-of-pixies-why-theyre-not-just-a-band-797384.

Bedford, Mark. "Smells Like 1990s Teen Spirit: the Dazzling Deception of *Fight Club*'s Grunge-Aesthetic." *New Cinemas: Journal of Contemporary Film* 9, no. 1 (2011): 49-63.

Bergson, Henri. *Key Writings*. Edited by Keith Ansell-Pearson and John Ó Maoilearca. Translated by Melissa McMahon. London: Bloomsbury, 2014.

Bernaerts, Lars. "*Fight Club* and the Embedding of Delirium in Narrative." *Style* 43, no. 3 (Fall 2009): 373-387.

Bluestone, George. *Novels into Film*. London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003.

Boon, Kevin Alexander. "Brutalised Bodies and Emasculated Politics: *Fight Club,* Consumerism, and Masculine Violence." *Third Text* 21, no. 1 (Winter 2001): 267-276.

Bordwell, David. *Narration in the Fiction Film*. London: Methuen and Co., Ltd., 1985.

Branigan, Edward. *Narrative Comprehension and Film*. London: Routledge, 1992.

Brom, Gerald. *The Child Thief.* New York: HarperCollins, 2009.

Bunn, Cullen. *Deadpool Kills Deadpool*. Issues 1-4. New York: Marvel, 2013.

Burgess, Olivia. "Revolutionary Bodies in Chuck Palahniuk's *Fight Club*." *Utopian Studies* 23, no.1 (2012): 263-280.

Burgoyne, "The Cinematic Narrator: The Logic and Pragmatics of Impersonal Narration," *Journal of Film and Video* 42, no. 1 (Spring 1990): 3-16.

Buse, Peter and Andrew Stott, editors. *Ghosts: Deconstruction, Psychoanalysis, History.* Houndsmills: Macmillan Press, 1999.

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

---. “Present(ing) Tense: Temporality and Tense in Comparative Theories of Literature-Film Adaptation.” *Literature/Film Quarterly* 31, no. 2 (2003): 82-92.

Cervantes, Miguel de Saavedra. *Don Quixote*. Translated by Edith Grossman. London: Secker and Warburg, 2004.

Chacon, Dulce. *The Sleeping Voice*. Translated by Nick Caistor. London: Harvill Secker, 2006.

Chatman, Seymour. *Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film*. London: Cornell University Press, 1978.

Chihara, Charles. *The Worlds of Possibility*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998.

Clark, Michael J. “Faludi, *Fight Club,* and Phallic Masculinity: Exploring the Emasculating Economics of Patriarchy.” *Journal of Men’s Studies* 11, no. 1 (2002): 65-76.

Cornea, Christine. *Science Fiction Cinema: Between Fantasy and Reality.* Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007.

Coupe, Laurence. *Myth*. London: Routledge, 1997.

Csicsery-Ronay, Istavan Jr.. “The Book is the Alien: On Certain and Uncertain Readings of Lem’s *Solaris*.” *Science Fiction Studies* 21, no. 1 (1985): 6-21.

Cupitt, Don. *Creation Out of Nothing*. London: SCM Press, 1990.

Currie, Gregory. *Image and Mind*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995.

---. “Unreliability Refigured: Narrative in Literature and Film.” *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 53, no. 1 (Winter 1995): 19-29.

Currie, Gregory and Ian Ravenscroft. *Recreative Minds: Imagination in Philosophy and Psychology.* Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2002.

Dalton, Stephen. “Andrei Tarkovsky, *Solaris* and *Stalker*: The Making of Two Inner-Space Odysseys.” *BFI*. (December 2014). Bfi.org.uk/features/tarkovsky. Accessed January 20, 2017.

Dauer, Francis W. “The Nature of Fictional Characters and the Referential Fallacy.” *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 53, no. 1 (1995): 31-38.

Davies, Ann. “Guillermo del Toro’s *Coronos*: The Vampire as Embodied Heterotopia.” *Quarterly Review of Film and Video* 25, no. 5 (2008): 395-403.

---. *Spanish Spaces*. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2012.

Davies, M. and T. Stode, editors. *Mental Simulation: Evaluations and Applications.* Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1995.

Davis, Colin. *Haunted Subjects: Deconstruction, Psychoanalysis and the Return of the Dead*. Basingstoke: Palmgrave, MacMillan, 2007.

De Lint, Charles. *The Onion Girl.* (New York: Tor Books, 2001).

Del Toro, Guillermo. "Commentary." *Pan's Labyrinth.* Estudios Picasso, 2006. DVD.

Deleuze, Gilles. *Cinema 1: The Movement-Image.* Translated by Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam. London: Continuum, 2005.

---. *Cinema 2: the Time-Image*. Translated by Hugh Tomlinson and Robert Galeta. London: Continuum, 2005.

Derrida, Jacques, Catherine Porter and Philip Lewis. "No Apocalypse, Not Now (Full Speed Ahead, Seven Missiles, Seven Missives)." *Diacritics* 14, no. 2 (1984): 20-31.

Derrida, Jacques. "The Law of Genre." Translated by Avital Ronell. *Critical Inquiry* 7, no. 1 (1980): 55-81.

---. *Spectres of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning, and the New International.* Translated by Peggy Kamuf. London: Routledge, 1994.

Dickens, Charles. *A Christmas Carol*. Peterborough, ON: Broadview Press, 2003.

Dillon, Steven. *The Solaris Effect: Art and Artifice in Contemporary American Cinema.* Austin: University of Texas Press, 2008.

Doležel, Lubomír. *Heterocosmica: Fiction and Possible Worlds.* Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998.

---. "Mimesis and Possible Worlds." *Poetics Today* 9 (1988): 475-496.

---. "Possible Worlds of Fiction and History." *New Literary History* 29, no. 4 (1998): 785-809.

Donato, Totaro. "Time, Bergson, and the Cinematographical Mechanism: Henri Bergson on the Philosophical Properties of Cinema." *Offscreen* 5, no. 1 (2001). Offscreen.com/view/bergson1.

Donoghue, Emma. *Room.* London: Picador, 2010.

Elliott, Kamilla. *Rethinking the Novel/Film Debate.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.

Encarnación, Omar G. "Peculiar but not Unique: Spain's Politics of Forgetting." *Aportes* 32, no. 94 (2017): 149-179.

Errington, Philip W. *J.K. Rowling: A Bibliography 1997-2013.* London: Bloomsbury, 2015.

Flood, Alison. "First Ever Direct English Translation of *Solaris* Published." *The Guardian*, 15 June, 2011. Accessed February 1, 2017. https://www.theguardian.com/books/2011/jun/15/first-direct-translation-solaris.

Fowler, Alistair. *Kinds of Literature: An Introduction to the Theory of Genres and Modes.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982.

Freedman, Carl. *Critical Theory and Science Fiction*. London: Wesleyan University Press, 2000.

Frege, Gottlob. *Translations from the Philosophical Writings of Gottlob Frege*. Edited by Peter Geach and Max Black. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1980.

Freud, Sigmund. "The Uncanny." In *Fantastic Literature: A Critical Reader*. Edited by David Sander. 74-101. (London: Praeger, 2004).

Friday, Krister. "'A Generation of Men Without History': *Fight Club*, Masculinity, and the Historical Symptom." *Postmodern Culture* 13, no. 3 (May 2003): DOI: 10.1353/pmc.2003.0016.

Fry, Stephen. *Heroes*. UK: Michael Joseph, 2018.

---. *Mythos*. UK: Michael Joseph, 2017.

Frye, Northrop. *Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971).

Funke, Cornelia. *Inkheart.* Translated by Anthea Bell. Frome: Chicken House, 2003.

Gaiman, Neil. *American Gods*. New York: HarperTorch, 2001.

---. *Anansi Boys.* New York: HarperTorch, 2005.

---. "Neil Gaiman Takes Questions on *Anansi Boys*." Interview by Rachel Martin and Mike Pesca. *NPR.* June 0, 2008. Npr.org/transcripts.

---. *Norse Mythology*. London: Bloomsbury, 2018.

---. *The Ocean at the End of the Lane.* London: Headline Publishing Group: 2014.

---. *The Sandman: Preludes and Nocturnes*. New York: DC Comics, 2010.

Gallagher, Mark. *Another Steven Soderbergh Experience: Authorship and Contemporary Hollywood*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2013.

Genette, Gérard. *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method*. Translated by Jane E. Lewin. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1980.

---. *Palimpsests: Literature in the Second Degree.* Translated by Channa Newman and Claude Doubinsky. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1997.

Gibson, William. "Burning Chrome." *Omni* (July, 1982).

---. *Neuromancer*. London: HarperCollins, 1995.

Giroux, Henry A.. "Brutalised Bodies and Emasculated Politics: *Fight Club,* Consumerism, and Masculine Violence." *Third Text* 14, no. 53 (2000): 21-41.

---. "Private Satisfactions and Public Disorders: *Fight Club,* Patriarchy, and he Politics of Masculine Violence." *JAC* 21, no.1 (Winter 2001): 1-31.

Goto, Hiromi. *A Chorus of Mushrooms.* London: The Women's Press, 1997.

Grønstad, Asbjørn. "One-Dimensional Men: *Fight Club* and the Poetics of the Body." *Film Criticism* 28, no. 1 (Fall 2003): 1-23.

Haase, Donald. "Children, War, and the Imaginative Space of Fairy Tales." *The Lion and the Unicorn* 24, no. 3 (2000): 360-377.

Hardcastle, Anne E.. "Ghosts of the Past and Present: Hauntology and the Spanish Civil War in Guillermo del Toro's *The Devil's Backbone*." *Journal of the Fantastic in the Arts* 15, no. 2 (2005): 119-131.

Hartney, Christopher. "With Spain in our Hearts: The Political Fantastic of Guillermo del Toro's *Laberinto del fauno* (2006) and *El Espinazo del diablo* (2001)." *Literature and Aesthetics* 19, no. 2 (2009): 187-201.

Henderson, Brian. "Tense, Mood, and Voice in Film (Notes after Genette)." *Film Quarterly* 36, no. 4 (1983): 4-17.

Hernandez, Paloma Aguilar. *Memory and Amnesia: The Role of the Spanish Civil War in the Transition to Democracy.* Translated by Mark Oakley. Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2008.

Hirsch, E.D., Jr. *Validity in Interpretation.* New Haven: Yale University Press, 1967.

Homer. *The Odyssey*. Translated by Emily R. Wilson. London: Canongate Books, 2008.

Hume, Kathryn. *Fantasy and Mimesis: Responses to Reality in Western Literature* (London: Methuen & Co., 1984).

Hutcheon, Linda and Siobhan O'Flynn. *A Theory of Adaptation*. London: Routledge, 2008.

Iocco, Melissa. "Addicted to Affliction: Masculinity and Perversity in *Crash* and *Fight Club*." *Gothic Studies* 9, no.1 (May 2007): 46-56.

Irwin, William. "*Fight Club*, Self-Definition, and the Fragility of Authenticity." *Revista Portuguesa de Filosofia* 69, no. 3/4 (2013): 673-684.

Jackson, Rosemary. *Fantasy: The Literature of Subversion*. London: Routledge, 1995.

Jameson, Frederic. *Archaeologies of the Future.* London: Verso, 2005.

---. *Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act.* London: Routledge, 2002.

Jeličková, Alice. "An Unreliable Narrator in an Unreliable World, Negotiating Between Rhetorical Narratology, Cognitive Studies and Possible Worlds Theory." In *Narrative Unreliability in the Twentieth-Century First-Person Novel, e*dited by Elk D'hoker and Gunther Martens, 281-302. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2008.

Johnson, Vida T. and Graham Petrie. *The Films of Andrei Tarkovsky: A Visual Fugue*. Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1994.

Jones, Owain. "True geography [ ] quickly forgotten, giving away to an adult-imagined universe.' Approaching the Otherness of Childhood." *Children's Geographies* 6, no. 2 (May 2008): 195-212.

Kaganovsky, Lilya. "Solaris and the White, White Screen." In *Picturing Russia: Explorations in Visual Culture,* edited by Valerie A. Kivelson and Joan Neuberger, 230-232. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008.

Kantaris, Geoffrey. "Between Dolls, Vampire, and Cyborgs: Recursive Bodies in Mexican Urban Cinema." 1998. Accessed June 9, 2018. www.latin-american.cam.ac.uk/culture/vampires.

---. “Cinema and Urbanías: Translocal Identities in Contemporary Mexican Film.” *Bulletin of Latin American Research* 25, no. 4 (2006): 517-527.

King, Claire Sisco. “It Cuts Both Ways: *Fight Club*, Masculinity, and Abject Hegemony.” *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies* 6, no. 4 (2009): 366-385.

Klecker, Cornelia. “Authentication Authority and Narrative Self-Erasure in *Fight Club*.” *American Studies* 59, no. 1 (2014): 83-98.

Kraniauskas, John. “*Cronos* and the Political Economy of Vampirism: Notes on a Historical Constellation.” In *Cannibalism and the Colonial World e*dited by Francis Barker, Peter Hulme, and Margaret Iversen, 142-157. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998.

Kripke, Saul. *Naming and Necessity*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1980.

Lawton, Anna, editor. *The Red Screen: Politics, Society, Art in Soviet Cinema*. London: Routledge, 1992.

Lázaro-Reboll, Antonio. *Spanish Horror Film*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012.

Lehane, Dennis. *Shutter Island.* New York: Harper Collins, 2003.

Leitch, Thomas M.. *Film Adaptation and its Discontents: From* Gone with the Wind *to* The Passion of the Christ*.* Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007.

Lem, Stanisław. *Microworlds.* Edited by Franz Rottensteiner. Translated by Franz Rottensteiner, A. Helen and Kurt Wolff Book. London: Secker and Warburg, 1985.

---. *Solaris*. Translated by Joanna Kilmartin and Steve Cox. London: Faber and Faber, 2016.

Lewis, David. *Counterfactuals*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1973.

---. “Counterpart Theory and Quantified Modal Logic.” *The Journal of Philosophy* 65, no. 5 (March 1968): 113-126.

---. *On the Plurality of Worlds*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986.

---. “Truth in Fiction.” *American Philosophical Quarterly* 15, no. 1 (1978): 37-46.

Lizardo, Omar. “*Fight Club*, or the Cultural Contradictions of Late Capitalism.” *Journal for Cultural Research* 11, no. 3 (2007): 221-243.

Lowenstein, Adam. *Shocking Representation: Historical Trauma, National Cinema and the Modern Horror Film*. Columbia: Columbia University Press, 2005.

Lukasiewicz, Tracie D. "The Parallelism of the Fantastic and the Real: Guillermo del Toro's *Pan's Labyrinth* and Neomagical Realism." In *Fairy Tale Films: Visions of Ambiguity,* edited by Pauline Greenhill, Sidney and Eve Matrix, 60-78. Colorado: University Press of Colorado, 2010.

Lury, Karen. *The Child in Film: Tears, Fears and Fairy Tales*. London: I.B. Tauris, 2010.

Lütticken, Sven. "Planet of the Remakes." *New Left Review* 25 (2004): 103-119.

Lynch, Scott. *The Lies of Locke Lamora*. The Gentleman Bastards Sequence. New York: Bantam Spectra, 2006.

Mackie, Penelope. *How Things Might Have Been: Individuals, Kinds, and Essential Properties*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006.

Mackie, Penelope and Marke Jago. "Transworld Identity." In *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Edited by Edward N. Zlta (Winter 2017 Edition). plato.stanford.ede/archives/win2017/entries/identity-transworld/.

Margolin, Uri. "The Doer and the Deed: Action as a Basis for Characterization in Narrative." *Poetics Today* 7, no. 2 (1986): 205-225.

---. "Individuals in Narrative Worlds: an Ontological Perspective." *Poetics Today* 11, no. 4 (1990): 843-871.

Martel, Yann. *Life of Pi: A Novel.* Toronto: Vintage Canada, 2002.

Martin, George R.R.. *A Game of Thrones*. A Song of Ice and Fire. London: Harper Voyager, 2011.

McDonald, Paul. *The Star System: Hollywood's Production of Popular Identities.* London: Wallflower Press, 2000.

McFarlane, Brian. *Novel to Film: An Introduction to the Theory of Adaptation.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995.

---. "It Wasn't Like That in the Book…" In *The Literature/Film Reader: Issues of Adaptation,* edited by James M. Welsh and Peter Lev, 3-14. Plymouth: Scarecrow Press, Inc., 2007.

Meletinsky, Eleazar M. *The Poetics of Myth*. Translated by Guy Lanoue and Alexandre Sadetsky. London: Routledge, 1998.

Mendelsohn, Farah. *Rhetorics of Fantasy.* Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 2008.

Mendelsohn, Farah and Edward James. *A Short History of Fantasy.* Revised edition. Faringdon: Libri Publishing, 2012, Middlesex University Press.

Merril, Judith. "What do you Mean: Science? Fiction?." In *SF: The Other Side of Realism*, edited by Thomas D. Clareson, 53-95. Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1971.

Miller, Madeleine. *Circe*. New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2018.

Miller, T.S. "The Two Kings and the Two Labyrinths: Escaping Escapism in Henson's *Labyrinth* and Del Toro's *Labyrinth*." *Extrapolation* 52, no. 1 (2011): 26-50.

Mroz, Matilda. *Temporality and Film Analysis*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012.

North, Ryan. *The Midas Flesh: Volume One.* Los Angeles: BOOM! Studios, 2014.

Palahniuk, Chuck. *Fight Club*. London: Vintage, 1997.

Pavel, Thomas G. *Fictional Worlds*. London: Harvard University Press, 1986.

Phelan, James, Peter J. Rabinowitz, Brian Richardson and Robyn Warhol. *Narrative Theory: Core Concepts and Critical Debates*. Ohio: Ohio State University Press, 2012.

Pixies. "Where is my Mind?." *Surfer Rosa* (4AD, 1988).

Plantinga, Alvin. *The Nature of Necessity*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1974.

Priest, Graham. "Non-Transitive Identity," in *Cuts and Clouds: Vagueness, its Nature and its Logic*, edited by Richard Dietz and Sebastiano Moruzzi, 400-416. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010.

Rescher, Nicholas. "The Ontology of the Possible." In *Logic and Ontology,* edited by Milton Munitz, 166-181. New York: New York University Press, 1973.

Richardson, Brian. *Unnatural Voices: Extreme Narration in Modern and Contemporary Fiction* (Ohio: The Ohio State University Press, 2006).

Ricoeur, Paul. *The Symbolism of Evil*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1991.

Rieder, John. “On Defining SF, or Not: Genre Theory, SF, and History.” *Science Fiction Studies* 37, no. 2 (2010): 191-209.

Riordan, Rick. *The Lightning Thief.* Percy Jackson and the Olympians. London: Puffin Books: 2006.

Ronen, Ruth. *Possible Worlds in Literary Theory*. Literature, Culture and Theory 7. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994.

Rothfuss, Patrick. *The Name of the Wind. The Kingkiller Chronicle: Day One.* London: Gollancz, 2008.

Rowling, J.K. *Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s Stone.* London: Bloomsbury, 1997.

---. *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer’s Stone.* Pennsylvania: Scholastic, 1998.

Rushdie, Salman. *The Satanic Verses.* London: Vintage, 1998.

Rutherford, Anne. “Precarious Boundaries: Affect, Mise-en-scène and the Senses in Angelopoulos’ Balkans Epic.” *Senses of Cinema* 31 (2004) sensesofcinema.com/2004/feature-articles/Angelopoulos_balkan_epic/.

Ryan, Marie-Laure. “Fiction, Non-Factuals, and the Principle of Minimal Departure.” *Poetics* 9, no. 4 (1980): 333-422.

---. “The Modal Structure of Narrative Universes.” *Poetics Today* 6, no. 4 (1985): 717-755.

---. “Possible Worlds in Recent Literary Theory.” *Style* 26, no. 4 (1992): 528-553.

---. “The Pragmatics of Personal and Impersonal Fiction,” *Poetics* 10 (1981): 517-539.

Salvestroni, Simonetta. “The Science-Fiction Films of Andrei Tarkovsky.” Edited and translated by R.M.P.. *Science Fiction Studies* 14, no. 2 (1987): 294-306.

Shakespeare, William. *Hamlet*. Edited by Ann Thompson and Taylor Neil. London: Arden Shakespeare, 2006.

Shaw, Deborah. *The Three Amigos: The Transnational Filmmaking of Guillermo del Toro, Alejandro González Iñárritu, and Alfonso Cuarón.* Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013.

Slabbert, Mathilda and Leonie Vilijoen. “Sustaining the Imaginative Life: Mythology and Fantasy in Neil Gaiman’s *American Gods*.” *Literator* 27, no. 3 (2006): 135-155.

Smith, Murray. “On the Twofoldness of Character.” *New Literary History* 42, no. 2 (2011): 277-294.

Smith, Richard Candida, editor. *Art and the Performance of Memory: Sounds and Gestures of Recollection*. Memory and Narrative. New York: Routledge, 2002.

Sobchack, Vivian. *Carnal Thoughts: Embodiment and Moving Image Culture.* Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004.

Soderbergh, Steven and George Clooney. "Interview with Steven Soderbergh and George Clooney." Interview with Geoff Andrew. *Steven Soderbergh*. Contemporary Film Directors, edited by Aaron Baker. February 12, 2003. 97-108. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2011.

Sturluson, Snorri. "Skáldskaparmál," in *Edda*. Translated and edited by Anthony Faulkes, 59-164. London: Everyman, 1995.

Suvin, Darko. *Metamorphoses of Science Fiction: On the Poetics of a Literary Genre*. London: Yale University Press, 1979.

Tarkovsky, Andrey. *Sculpting in Time: The Great Russian Filmmaker Discusses His Art*. Translated by Kitty Hunter-Blair. Austin: University of Texas press, 1987.

Tatar, Maria. "Why Fairy tales Matter: The Performative and the Transformative," *Western Folklore* 69, no. 1 (Winter 2010): 55-64.

Tierney, Dolores. "Transnational Political Horror in *Cronos* (1993), *El Espinazo del diablo* (2001), and *El Laberinto del fauno* (2006)." In *The Transnational Fantasies of Guillermo del Toro.* Edited by Ann Davies, Deborah Shaw, and Dolores Tierney, 161-182. New York: Palgrave, Macmillan U.S., 2014.

Tighe, Carl. "Stanisław Lem: Socio-Policial Sci-Fi." *The Modern Language Review* 94, no. 3 (1999): 758-774.

Todorov, Tzvetan. *The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1980.

Tolkien, J.R.R.. *The Lord of the Rings*. London: HarperCollins, 2007.

Totaro, Donato. "Time, Bergson, and the Cinematographical Mechanism: Henri Bergson on the Philosophical Properties of Cinema." *Offscreen* 5, no. 1 (2001) offscreen.com.view/bergson1.

Tuss, Alex. “Masculine Identity and Success: A Critical Analysis of Patricia Highsmith’s *The Talented Mr. Ripley* and Chuck Palahniuk’s *Fight Club*.” *Journal of Men’s Studies* 12, no. 2 (Winter 2004): 93-102.

Vilarós, Teresa M. “The Novel Beyond Modernity.” In *The Cambridge Companion to the Spanish Novel*, edited by Harriet turner and Adelaida López de Martinez, 251-263. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006.

Von Hendy, Andrew. *The Modern Construction of Myth.* Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2002.

Wald, Christina. “Second Selves, Second Stories: Unreliable Narration and the Circularity of Reading in Ford Madox Ford’s *The Good Soldier* and Chuck Palahniuik’s/David Fincher’s *Fight Club*.” *Symbolism: An International annual of Critical Aesthetics* 9 (2010): 217-241.

Wilson, George. “Transparency and Twist in Narrative Fiction Film,” *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 64, no. 1 (2006): 81-95.

Wittgenstein, Ludwig. *Philosophical Investigations*. Translated by G.E.M. Anscombe. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1978.

Wollheim, Richard. *Painting as Art*. London: Thames and Hudson, 1987.

Yacavone, Daniel. *Film Worlds: A Philosophical Aesthetics of Cinema*. Chichester: Columbia University Press, 2015.

Yeats, W.B. *A Vision.* New York: Macmillan, 1966.

Zipes, Jack. “The Enchanted Forest of the Brothers Grimm: New Modes of Approaching the Grimm’s Fairy Tales.” *Germanic Review* 62, no. 2 (Spring 1987): 66-74.

---. “Fairy Tale as Myth/Myth as Fairy Tale.” *Children’s Literature Association Quarterly* (1987): 107-110.

Filmography

10 Cloverfield Lane. Directed by Dan Trachtenberg. Bad Robot Productions, 2016. Film.

12 Monkeys. Directed by Terry Gilliam. Atlas Entertainment, 1995. Film.

"11001001," Star Trek: The Next Generation. Broadcast Syndication. February 1, 1988. Television Broadcast.

2001: A Space Odyssey. Directed by Stanley Kubrick. Metro Goldwyn-Mayer, 1968. Film.

American History X. Directed by Tony Kaye. New Line Cinema, 1998. Film.

Basic Instinct. Directed by Paul Verhoeven. Carolco Pictures, 1992. Film.

Beautiful Mind, A. Directed by Ron Howard. Universal Pictures, 2001. Film.

Big Fish. Directed by Tim Burton. Columbia Pictures, 2003. Film.

Blazing Saddles. Directed by Mel Brooks. Crossbow Productions, 1974. Film.

Bram Stoker's Dracula. Directed by Francis Ford Coppola. American Zoetrope, 1992. Film.

Cronos. Directed by Guillermo del Toro. CNCAIMC, 1993. Film.

Dark Side of the Sun, The. Directed by Božidar Nikolić. Avala Film: 1988. Film.

Dark Water. Directed by Hideo Nakata. Japan: Kadokawa Shoten Publishing Co., 2002. Film.

Devil's Backbone, The. Directed by Guillermo del Toro. El Deseo, 2001. Film.

Dr. Strangelove or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb. Directed by Stanley Kubrick. Columbia Pictures, 1964. Film.

Edward Scissorhands. Directed by Tim Burton. 20th Century Fox, 1990. Film.

Ella Enchanted. Directed by Tommy O'Haver. Blessington Film Productions, 2004. Film.

Elysium. Directed by Neill Blomkamp. TriStar Pictures, 2013.

Exorcist, The. Directed by William Friedkin. Warner Bros., 1973. Film.

Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas. Directed by Terry Gilliam. Fear and Loathing LLC, 1998. Film.

Fellowship of the Ring, The. Directed by Peter Jackson. New Line Cinema, 2001. Film.

---. Directed by Peter Jackson. Extended edition. New Line Cinema, 2002. DVD.

Fight Club. Directed by David Fincher. Fox 2000 Pictures, 1999. Film.

From Russia with Love. Directed by Terence Young. Eon Productions, 1968. Film.

Green Mile, The. Directed by Frank Darabont. Castle Rock Entertainment, 1999. Film.

Grudge, The. Directed by Takashi Shimizu. Columbia Pictures, 2004. Film.

Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone. Directed by Chris Columbus. Warner Bros., 2001. Film.

Horse Girl. Directed by Jeff Baena. Duplass Brothers Production, 2020. Film.

I Know What You Did Last Summer. Directed by Jim Gillespie. Mandalay Entertainment, 1997. Film.

Inception. Directed by Christopher Nolan. Warner Bros., 2010. Film.

Inkheart. Directed by Iain Softley. New Line Cinema, 2008. Film.

Interview with the Vampire: The Vampire Chronicles. Directed by Neil Jordan. The Geffen Film Company, 1994. Film.

JoJo Rabbit. Directed by Taika Waititi. TSG Entertainment, 2019. Film.

Ju-On. Directed by Takashi Shimizu. Toei Video Company, 2000. Film.

Ju-On: The Grudge. Directed by Takashi Shimizu. Japan: Pioneer LDC, 2002. Film.

Låt den rätte komma in. Directed by Tomas Alfredson. EFTI, 2008. Film.

Legends of the Fall. Directed by Edward Zwick. Bedford Falls Productions, 1994. Film.

Let Me In. Directed by Matt Reeves. Overture Films, 2010. Film.

Locker, The. Directed by Kei Horie. Japan: Bad Taste Visual Voice, 2004. Film.

Maltese Falcon, The. Directed by John Huston. Warner Bros., 1941. Film.

Matrix, The. Directed by Lana and Lilly Wachowski. Warner Bros., 1999. Film.

Manchurian Candidate, The. Directed by John Frankenheimer. M.C. Productions, 1962. Film.

Meet Joe Black. Directed by Martin Brest. City Light Films, 1998). Film.

Moonraker. Directed by Lewis Gilbert. Eon Productions, 1979. Film.

NeverEnding Story, The. Directed by Wolfgang Peterson. Constantin Film, 1984. Film.

Omen, The. Directed by Richard Donner. Twentieth Century Fox, 1976. Film.

Pan's Labyrinth. Directed by Guillermo del Toro. Estudios Picasso, 2006. Film.

Painless, directed by Juan Carlos Medina. Les Films D'Antoine, 2012. Film.

Personal History of David Copperfield, The. Directed by Armando Iannucci. FilmNation Entertainment, 2019. Film.

Planet of the Apes. Directed by Franklin J. Schaffner. PAJAC Productions, 1968. Film.

Poltergeist. Directed by Tobe Hooper. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, 1982. Film.

Primal Fear. Directed by Gregory Hoblit. Paramount Pictures, 1996. Film.

Ring, The. Directed by Gore Verbinski. Dreamworks, 2002. Film.

Ringu. Directed by Hideo Nakata. Basara Pictures, 1998. Film.

Rosemary's Baby. Directed by Roman Polanski. William Castle Productions, 1968. Film.

Rounders. Directed by John Dahl. Miramax, 1998. Film.

Royal Tenenbaums, The. Directed by Wes Anderson. Touchstone Pictures, 2001. Film.

Se7en. Directed by David Fincher. Cecci Gori Pictures, 1995. Film.

Seven Years in Tibet. Directed by Jean-Jacques Annaud. Mandalay Entertainment, 1997. Film.

Shining, The. Directed by Stanley Kubrick. Warner Bros., 1980. Film.

Sin City. Directed by Frank Miller, Robert Rodriguez and Quentin Tarantino. Dimension Films, 2005. Film.

Sleeping Beauty. Directed by Clyde Geronimi. Walt Disney Productinos, 1959. Film.

Snowpiercer. Directed by Bon Joon Ho. Moho Film, 2013. Film.

Solaris. Directed by Steven Soderbergh. Twentieth Century Fox, 2002. Film.

---. Directed by Andrei Tarkovsky. Mosfilm, 1972. Film.

Spirit of the Beehive. Directed by Victor Erice. Elías Querejeta Producciones Cinematográficas S.L., 1973. Film.

Spy Who Came in from the Cold, The. Directed by Martin Ritt. Salem Films Limited, 1965. Film.

Star Wars: Episode IV. Directed by George Lucas. Lucasfilm, 1977. Film.

---. Directed by George Lucas. Special Edition. Lucasfilm, 1997. DVD.

---. Directed by George Lucas. Trilogy Edition. Lucasfilm, 2004. DVD.

Sucker Punch. Directed by Zack Snyder. Warner Bros., 2011. Film.

Toy Story. Directed by John Lasseter. Pixar Animation Studios, 1995. Film.

Truman Show, The. Directed by Peter Weir. Paramount Pictures, 1998. Film.

Valley of the Dolls. Directed by Mark Robson. 20th Century Fox, 1967. Film.

"Waiting in the Wings." *Angel.* WB Network. February 4, 2002. Television broadcast.

While at War. Directed by Alejandro Amenábar. Mod Producciones, 2019. Film.