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INTRODUCTION

ADAPTING ADAPTATION STUDIES TO COMICS STUDIES

David Roche, Isabelle Schmitt-Pitiot and Benoît Mitaine

Many critical, historical and theoretical studies devoted to comics state their intention to defend the medium as soon as the opening lines. This book abides by that tradition: studying comics remains, today, an act of aesthetic and political legitimatization, of which the insistent usage of the term “ninth art” by fans and scholars is just one of the many symptoms. It is only proper to acknowledge it.

If film studies gained recognition in the 1960s, with film departments opening in North American and British universities (Sklar 300; Leitch 244), research on comics and graphic novels really took off in the 1990s. By proving that comics, like paraliterature, should be considered as an aesthetic form with cultural import, Umberto Eco’s 1962 essay “The Myth of Superman”ⁱ no doubt contributed to arousing interest in the medium. 1962 was also the year the Club des bandes dessinées (i.e., the Comics Club) was founded and the first issue of their journal *Giff-Wiff* was published; the association’s board included Pierre Couperie, Jean-Claude Forest, Francis Lacassin and filmmaker Alain Resnais, and counted Eco among its sympathizers (Groensteen, *Un Objet* 110-29). Books and articles by Pierre Fresnault-Deruelle (1982), Luc Boltanski (1975), Alain Rey (1978) and Francis Lacassin (1982) were published in the 1970s. In North America, some of the first texts on comics included how-to books by Stan Lee (1984), famous for writing for Marvel in the 1960s, and by Will Eisner (1985), author of *The Spirit* (1940-1952) and *A Contract with God* (1978), often considered to be the first graphic novel. If Eisner’s aim was, above all, pedagogical, his books do make an effort to conceptualize comics art despite a lack of theoretical framework; theorists of the 1990s and 2000s have often taken Eisner’s ideas as a starting point. The huge success of several graphic novels in the 1980s and 1990s further encouraged the development of comics studies. Works like Alan Moore and David Gibbons’s *Watchmen* (1986-1987), featured in the ALL-TIME 100 Novels of Time Entertainment,ⁱⁱ Art Spiegelman’s *Maus* (1973-1991) which was awarded the Pulitzer Prize in 1992, Chris Ware’s *Jimmy Corrigan: The Smartest Kid on Earth* (1993-2000) which received the Guardian First Book Award in 2001, and Marjane Satrapi’s *Persepolis* (2000-2003), managed to reach an audience that went beyond the usual comic book readership (Gabilliet 100-1). The proliferation of adaptations based on comics and graphic novels since the 2000s

has, in all likelihood, drawn the attention of film scholars (Goggin and Hassler-Forrest 3), as well as that of theorists of adaptation, intermediality and transmedia. Several academic journals emerged in the 2000s: *The International Journal of Comic Art* in 1999, *ImageText* in 2004, *European Comic Art* in 2008, *Studies in Comics* and *Journal of Graphic Novels and Comics* in 2010, and *Comicalités* in 2011.ⁱⁱⁱ Clearly, comics studies have gained ground,^{iv} and university libraries increasingly have sections exclusively devoted to them. Today, the field is dominated by two approaches that somewhat resemble those that characterize contemporary film studies: a formalist/semiological/semiotic and (mainly) European approach, represented by scholars like Benoît Peeters, Thierry Groensteen and Philippe Marion, and a more North American approach, drawing mainly on cultural studies, evidenced by the University Press of Mississippi's impressive catalogue.^v

For a long time, the term "adapation" has been synonymous with film adaptation. George Bluestone's 1957 book marked the birth of film adaptation as a central concern of both film and literary studies. This interest gave way to a full-fledged branch in the wake of Brian McFarlane's 1996 *Novel to Film*, which calls into question the idea of fidelity that had long been the thread of discussions on film adaptation. In 1993, André Gaudreault and Thierry Groensteen organized a conference in Cerisy, France, entitled "La Transécriture," i.e., "transwriting"; the proceedings, published in 1998, contain several articles on comics and adaptations.^{vi} The Austenmania phenomenon of the 1990s may also have contributed to the increasing interest in film adaptation; countless books, articles and dissertations have been written on successful films and TV productions like *Sense and Sensibility* (Ang Lee, 1995), *Pride and Prejudice* (BBC, 1995), *Emma* (Douglas McGrath, 1996), *Mansfield Park* (Patricia Rozema, 1997), *Bridget Jones's Diary* (Sharon Maguire, 2001), *Bride and Prejudice* (Gurinder Chadha, 2004) and *Pride & Prejudice* (Joe Wright, 2005).^{vii} The Association of Adaptation Studies was founded in 2006, and in 2008 two academic journals, *Adaptation* and *Journal of Adaptation in Film & Performance*, were launched.

Though the edited volume *Film Adaptation* (2000) deals exclusively with film adaptations of literary texts (mainly novels), its editor, James Naremore, regretted that most studies of adaptation showed little interest in other media and popular culture (1, 12). The publication of Linda Hutcheon's *A Theory of Adaptation* in 2006 was, in this respect, a major turning point. Defining adaptation as an intersemiotic transposition from one system of signs to another (16), a new encoding that adapts the source to a different play on conventions and signs, Hutcheon analyzes all sorts of media—illustrations, video games, theme parks, opera, ballet

and comics (xiv)—proposing, for instance, case studies of the different avatars of Carmen in literature, theater and opera (153). Adaptation, for Hutcheon, can even be conceived from a Darwinian perspective. Reprising the theory Richard Dawkins developed in *The Selfish Gene* (176), she compares “stories” to “memes,” i.e., ideas that are transmitted by mutating in order to adapt to changes in the environment. In so doing, adaptation, which associates both conservation and novelty, becomes the process by which a cultural heritage of stories, characters and myths survive through evolution (167). Her very inclusive approach does not, however, lead to a boundless definition of adaptation that would entirely equate it to intertextuality, even though the two are closely linked. Moreover, Hutcheon clearly shifts the discussion away from comparative discussions that often boil down to establishing a hierarchy between the adapted work and its adaptations: an adaptation is “a work that is second without being secondary” (9). She nonetheless raises the question of legitimacy by underlining the paradox that adaptations are often looked down on, even though they are increasingly popular on the contemporary artistic scene (2). Economic motivations alone cannot explain this adaptation craze, as the pleasure of the viewer or reader aware that s/he is consuming an adaptation always depends on a tension between his/her memory of the adapted work and taste for novelty (172). Hutcheon identifies three criteria necessary to define an adaptation:

- (1) an acknowledged transposition of one or several works into a similar or different medium;
- (2) “[a]n act of both creative *and* interpretative appropriation/salvaging” (meaning that the adaptation is not a mere copy);
- (3) “[a]n extended intertextual engagement with the adapted work” (8).

For Hutcheon, adaptation should be taken both as a product and a process^{viii} of creation and reception; adaptations must systematically be studied as palimpsests haunted by the works they adapt, the creative process resembling a kind of variation (8, 173-76). Her search for common denominators between media and genres allows her to distinguish between media like literary texts that function in the “telling/narrating” mode, media like drama and film that function in the “showing/performing” mode, and those like video games that offer a form of interaction with the receiver, sometimes even an experience of actual immersion, as in a theme park (10-15, 38-52). Questions of fidelity and legitimacy are, thus, cast aside, as analysis focuses largely on the receiver’s modes of engagement, which vary from one medium to another, each medium engaging differently with the mind and imagination.

The relationship between comics and adaptation, either with comics as the source or the adaptation, has received little critical attention, and this book proposes to try and make up for

the lack thereof. At first glance, comics adaptations of literary works would seem to be less frequent than film or TV adaptations of comics (Vanderbeke 104), a phenomenon which has gained ground in the 2000s. The practice of adapting films and TV shows into comics expanded in the 1980s, the American publisher Dark Horse making it one of its specialities (Gabilliet 100). Publishers like Dark Horse, Tokyopop, Marvel and Del Rey have been releasing more and more adaptations of successful contemporary writers like Stephen King and Dean Koontz, collaborating closely with them in order to assert that the adaptations have been blessed by the original authors (Price 23-26). In both cases, the process involves not so much adapting the text itself, but above all exploring the diegetic universe through spin-offs. These forms of adaptation are central to the transmedia marketing strategies developed in the era of the new Hollywood blockbuster (Sklar 339-41; Cook 51), notably since George Lucas's *Star Wars* (1977) when the Marvel comics came out at the same time as the film.

And yet, according to Sandra Eva Boschenhoff and Frank Erik Pointner, the false impression that adaptation concerns film more than comics is simply due to the fact that the former enjoys more limelight. In fact, comics adaptations of literary texts far outnumber film adaptations of comics, but the phenomenon is less visible because the books are published in smaller numbers (Pointner and Boschenhoff 87) and the publicity power of film producers largely outweighs that of comics publishers. A cursory glance at the number of adaptations made and the number of publishers (Casterman, Delcourt, Vent d'Ouest, etc.) having started collections entirely dedicated to adaptations leaves no doubt that literature, what with the number of classics that are now in the public domain, represents a godsend for many publishers, authors and cartoonists, who can pick and choose among the cultural heritage of the World Republic of Letters. This phenomenon is nothing new, though maybe not in such proportions; from the 1940s to the 1960s, the Gilberton Company published over 160 titles in its famous comic book series *Classics Illustrated* and sold approximately 200 million books (Gabilliet 28). Although comics adaptations of literary classics became a quasi-industry from the 1950s on, the practice of adaptation dates back to the very origins of comics. 1840 saw the first adaptation of a comics into a novel (a fairly unique case of novelization in the history of adaptation) by the founding father and first theoretician of comics, Rodolphe Töppfer (Groensteen and Peeters vii), who presented his artistic exploit in his preface to *The Voyages and Adventures of Dr. Festus*^{ix} (1833) in the following manner:

This extraordinary story was composed thanks to processes that were equally extraordinary. Initially represented graphically in a series of sketches, it was then

translated from these sketches into the following text. Today, the text and sketches are being published both together and separately. The same story exists, then, in two forms, but, as the Abbot of Saint-Réal cleverly observed, the differences between two similar things largely change their similarities. (V-VI, our translation)

Comics had hardly been invented that the first comics self-adaptation had been created!^x So it should come as a no surprise that Winsor McCay, another of the medium's genius forefathers, was also at the origin of some of the first comics adaptations, first for the music hall, then on film (Thompson and Bordwell 41):

In 1980, almost three years after its creation, *Little Nemo*^{xi} was performed on Broadway as a musical and went on tour across the United States [...]. In 1911, McCay enthusiastically set off on the cartoon adventure. Having taken comics to heights unsurpassed, he became one of the pioneers of animation film. (Peeters, "Une exploration transmédiatique" 250)

Töpffer and McCay are proof that the possibilities of adaptation—self-adaptation, novelization, transposition to the stage or screen, and thus from what Hutcheon calls narrating to performing arts (*A Theory of Adaptation* 10)—were quickly explored. The fact that these adaptations were contemporary to the original creations and that they were the work of the inventors of comics almost suggests that this cultural practice is consubstantial to the medium.

Adaptation has thus been an integral part of the history of comics from the very beginning, facilitated, no doubt, by the polysemiotic nature of a medium that draws its capacity to tell stories both from images^{xii} and words. As early as 1845, Töpffer called it a "literature in prints"; Fresnault-Deruelle (1972) spoke of the alliance between an "iconic" and a "linguistic message" (58), Alain Rey (1978) of the co-presence of "textual and figural values" (104), McCloud (1994) of an art of "juxtaposed pictorial and other images in deliberate sequence" (9), Groensteen (1999) of the "simultaneous mobilization of the entirety of codes (visual and discursive)" (*The System* 6), and Ann Miller (2007) of a "narrative and visual art" (75). The heterogeneity of comics endows them with the capacity of being both the source and recipient in the adaptation process; whether adapted or adapter, comics can greatly benefit from this process.

Indeed, comics adaptations of literary texts were driven, early on, by a desire for legitimacy, as well as by the newborn industry's interest in multiplying potential profits—McCay's adaptations of *Little Nemo* are a good example of this. The question "Why adapt?", as Linda Hutcheon has noted, points both to economic motives—adaptation has commercial

value (86-88)—and cultural motives that imply a hierarchy within the arts (91). This phenomenon has been noted by film historians and adaptation theorists, who have underlined that, in the 1910s, the American film industry, determined not to get bogged down in the carnival rut, turned to adapting novels as a strategy, on the one hand, to attract the middle and upper classes, who controlled the economic and cultural capital as well as the instruments of consecration, and, on the other, to guarantee commercial success by benefiting from the notoriety of the author being adapted (Sklar 30, 45; Thompson and Bordwell 2; Leitch, *Adaptation* 27; Carcaud-Macaire and Clerc 17-18). Needless to say, comics also partake in these survival strategies that invite the “weak” to parasitically feed on the strengths of the “strong”; a parallel may be made with what Pascale Casanova says of the translation of novels written in dominated languages into dominant languages, a relationship she presents not only as a “naturalization” (in terms of identity), but also as a form of “literarization” she describes as an “act of consecration which gives access to literary visibility and existence” (191). Of course, the quest for legitimacy is logically and simultaneously accompanied by a quest for economic capital, which contributes equally, in its own way, to increase the symbolic capital. In short, adaptation is a sort of missing link in the comics genome, which can be thought in terms of the evolution of the species (whereby to adapt is to survive), of publishing and authorial strategies (obtaining economic and symbolic profits), and as a cultural symptom of a society experiencing a shift from *logos* (word) to *eikôn* (image).

However, reducing adaptation exclusively to economic gain could lead us to forget that, when it comes to comics where the artist’s autonomy remains central—if only because it is not a costly medium to work in—adaptation often originates in the personal choice of an artist or author (and not a publisher). Hutcheon insists that it is also necessary to take into account the adapter’s personal and political motives (*A Theory of Adaptation* 92-95). An author’s emotional response to a given work (bliss, fear, admiration, etc.) may have made him want to express it in another artistic form (Alberto Breccia adapting H.P. Lovecraft immediately comes to mind). Now and again, adaptation can be the fruit of love rather than commercial interest: love for a work of art from another medium and love for the medium the artist uses as a means of expression. Adapting becomes, then, a challenge.

Apart from Sandra Eva Boschenhoff’s recent *Tall Tales in Comic Diction*, most articles on comics and adaptation are case studies of the many film adaptations of comics, or of comics adaptations of literary texts, such as Paul Karasik and David Mazzucchelli’s *City of Glass*^{xiii} (1994), adapted from Paul Auster’s 1985 novel, Stéphane Heuet’s *Remembrance of Things Past*^{xiv} (1998), or the many adaptations of the tales of Edgar Allan Poe.^{xv} We have found few

articles dealing with this issue in a general or theoretical manner, except for those of Gilles Ciment^{xvi} (1998) and Pascal Lefèvre (2007) on film adaptations of comics, and those of Dirk Vanderbeke (2010) and Frank Erik Pointer and Sandra Eva Boschenhoff (2010) on comics adaptations of literary texts. Gaudreault and Groensteen (1998), Jan Baetens (2009), Thomas Leitch (*Adaptation* 192-201) and Hutcheon (*A Theory of Adaptation* 88) briefly discuss comics as both adaptation and adapted.

For Lefèvre, who only deals with live-action cinema, the distinction between comics and cinema has to do, above all, with the ontologies of drawn and photographic images (2). Focusing on adaptation as a practice, he identifies four problems adapters are faced with (12):

- (1) the length of the story. As comics are usually too long, the adaptation process involves elisions as well as additions (3-4);
- (2) the specific characteristics of the lay-out of a comic book and of the composition of the film image. Comics are a “more spatial” medium that enables the reader to move back and forth from one panel to another, while cinema is a more linear form (5-6). Some adaptations, like *Hulk* (Ang Lee, 2003), thus resort to the split screen in order to imitate panels (Lefèvre 6; Boillat 47);
- (3) the translation from drawn to photographic image. For Lefèvre, photography is deemed more “realistic,” while drawn images are always, from the start, a “visual interpretation of the world” (8-9). Some adapters choose to emphasize the artificiality of the sets to evoke a comic book world (10). In this respect, *Dick Tracy* (Warren Beatty, 1990) represents, for Michael Cohen, the first attempt to reproduce a comics aesthetics in film (13); Alain Resnais’s *I Want to Go Home* (1989) also comes to mind;
- (4) sound. Comics is a “silent” medium (4) and is, in this respect, closer to silent cinema (11).

If points (1) and (4) equally concern film adaptations of literary texts, points (2) and (3) are more specific to film adaptations of comics. That said, Lefèvre seems to confuse the process of adaptation and a work which foregrounds its own status as an adaptation when he implies that it is desirable for the adapted work to transpire in the adaptation. Yet an adaptation has no obligation to visually resemble the adapted work. Moreover, what Alain Boillat calls a “comics effect” in the chapter in this volume can be produced in a film that is not an adaptation. What Lefèvre’s article rightly draws attention to is that when dealing with a film adaptation of a comic book or a graphic novel, the question of fidelity involves not only the story and the characters, but also the “visual fidelity” of the adaptation (Hassler-Forest 120), since the comic book can practically serve as a storyboard.

Vanderbeke is also interested in the specificities of literary fiction and comics, but he reflects mainly on the way certain key aspects are dealt with in both media:

- (1) the relationship between text and image. The fidelity to the source text sometimes leads to a lack of balance that is detrimental to the image, suggesting that the artist does not sufficiently trust his/her own medium's specificities (108). Vanderbeke's analysis of *City of Glass* largely recalls Eisner's contention that the text should never be redundant, making the image a mere "illustration," but must aim at producing effects of contrast (*Comics and Sequential Art* 132);
- (2) subjectivity. Comics are very much capable of evoking the inner life of characters, notably through the usage of color (112). In this respect, they are closer to literary fiction than to film;
- (3) time. Sequentiality enables comics to both expand and compress time (113), in a similar manner as literary fiction;
- (4) intertextuality. Pictural references can largely compensate for the medium's "lack of linguistic depth" (114);
- (5) the implicit. The gutter, which many critics see as comics' discrete element *par excellence* (McCloud 60-93; Peeters, *Case* 31; Groensteen, *The System* 114-15; Goggin and Hassler-Forest 1), produces ellipses and forms of "unseen" equivalent, to some extent, to the unsaid in a literary text (Vanderbeke 116). This ties in with Groensteen's considerations regarding the intericonic "blank," whose function is to guarantee iconic interdependence and which he compares to the "blanks"^{xvii} Wolfgang Iser argues the reader fills in the act of reading (*The System* 114); Leitch has recently made a similar parallel (195).

Vanderbeke's approach is laudable insofar as he does attempt to offer a more theoretical and aesthetic perspective. Clearly, studying adaptation allows, here, to compare two media and foreground their specificities. However, it is, no doubt, possible to draw the same conclusions without resorting to a corpus of adaptations. Moreover, Vanderbeke's selection of five key points raises further questions concerning the handling of space, narration or narrative structure in both media.

Like Seymour Chatman in "What Novels Can Do That Films Can't (and Vice Versa)" (1981), Boeschhoff and Pointner attempt to identify what comics do better than literature by exploring the specificity of each medium. Referring to Gotthold Ephraim Lessing's 1776 thesis according to which painting is a spatial art and literary fiction a temporal one (89), they posit that, like any image, comics are better suited to evoking both wide spaces or claustrophobic

settings than literature (90-91), but perhaps less to translating allegory (104-5). The drawn image can, in effect, express inner states through objects, situations or actions in a form of “objective correlative” (92). In comics, focalization is therefore not restricted to the text but equally involves the image (95).^{xviii}

Considering how little has been written on the relationship between comics and adaptation, it seems necessary to take up Jan Baetens’s (2009) suggestion to turn to the theory and practice of film adaptation in order to assess how some issues and methodologies can be adapted to comics studies. True, critical and theoretical writings on comics have found it difficult to free themselves from film studies. Even though the origins of sequential art go back to the 18th and 19th centuries, the literature on comics has often borrowed terms like framing, montage and sequence from film studies, claiming a sense of legitimacy from its filiation to film at the risk of ignoring the medium’s specificities (Boillat 13, 18, 20)—Matteo Stefanelli goes so far as to conclude that “comics became a medium thanks to cinema” (299). So it is certainly not out of a desire to legitimize comics that we will draw on film adaptation studies, but only in order to identify the stakes common to adaptations in both media. The points of discussion that follow thus draw on some of the major writings on film adaptations that have proposed varying and complementary approaches: Linda Coremans (1990), Brian McFarlane (1996), James Naremore (2000), Robert Stam^{xix} (2000 and 2005), Michel Serceau (2007), Thomas Leitch (2009) and Francis Vanoye (2011).

The Criterion of Fidelity

Studies of comics adaptations have yet to free themselves from it, as Baetens (2009) and Boschenhoff and Pointner (88) have noted. If fidelity has, since McFarlane, repeatedly been called into question in film adaptation studies, in practice it still underlies many studies, even in books edited by critics who deplore it (Naremore 2; Leitch 4). This may be due to the fact that, historically, interest in film adaptation first arose within the field of literary studies and not film studies (Leitch 1). The notion of fidelity raises several questions, notably: to what is the adapter supposed to be faithful to? To the story, the characters or the original author’s intentions, if it were even possible to know what they were in the first place (Stam 15)? The canonical text is, then, upheld as a sort of transcendent benchmark (Leitch 3), instead of the many criteria that could enable an assessment of whether or not the adaptation is a “good” film, a “good” comic book or a “good” novel. In the end, analyzing an adaptation with this criterion in mind often leads to confirming the superiority of the literary work over the adaptation—and even that of literature over cinema (Stam 4); Leitch stresses that the opposite situation also

exists, for instance when a filmmaker like Alfred Hitchcock deliberately adapts little valued works in order to reinforce his own status as an auteur (5, 239). The concern with fidelity is, moreover, deeply rooted in the reader's psyche when it involves the adaptation of a literary work into a visual art because, as Stam has remarked, the adaptation then competes with the reader's "phantasmatic relation to the source text" (15). This is why fidelity also preoccupies artists and producers, who seek the approval of fans of the original, often for financial reasons. The "visual fidelity," which the transposition from one visual art to another seems to demand, can, as Leitch has noted, become outright "fetishism" in a film like *Sin City* (Robert Rodriguez and Frank Miller, 2005) (201). In the end, "fidelity to the medium" may be more important than fidelity to the source (Gaudreault and Marion, "Transécriture" 269).

Comparative Analysis

Stam describes it more precisely as a "comparative narratology." It raises the following questions: "What events from the novel's story have been eliminated, added, or changed in the adaptation, and, more important, why?" (34). Additions, elisions and modifications,^{xx} including amplifications and condensations, must then be examined in order to determine "[w]hat principles orient the choices" (Stam 34). These principles can be grounded in financial economy—filming such and such a scene is too costly (Stam 43)—narrative economy—expanding a short story, cutting a novel (Leitch 99)—or censorship and, more generally, surrounding ideological discourses (Stam 42). All these aspects may concern comics which are subject to both length and censorship constraints (in the U.S., for instance, the Comics Code Authority was implemented in 1954). The problem with the comparative approach is that it is often haunted by the notion of fidelity when the source is considered to be an "unsurpassable model" (Baetens 2009). This is why Baetens (2009) advocates, rather, that its status as an adaptation be taken into account, which is what Leitch brilliantly does in *Film Adaptation and Its Discontents*. By relying on the writings of the narratologists and semiologists of each medium (for instance, Roland Barthes and Gérard Genette for literature, Christian Metz, David Bordwell, Kristin Thompson and François Jost for film, Groensteen and Ann Miller for comics), comparative narratology could feed theoretical debates both on the specificities of each medium and on the history of research fields that have often developed concepts and terms borrowed from one another.

Analyzing "Media Specificity"

This has long been the approach favored in adaptation studies, namely in the book edited by Gaudreault and Groensteen (Groensteen, “Fictions” 11), the aim being to determine the possibilities of such and such medium. It tends to describe the process of adaptation as a form of “translation” or “transposition.” The story is viewed as potentially stable, and the questions raised are thus: “Can stories ‘migrate’ from a less to a more appropriate medium? Do stories pre-exist their mediation?” (Stam 16); these questions recall Philippe Marion’s notion of a story’s “mediagenia”^{xxi} or of a media’s “adaptagenia” (Gaudreault, “Variations” 270-71; Groensteen, “Le processus” 276). It is with these questions in mind that assessing to what extent comics really represent an “intermediate form” between text and film acquires particular relevance (Vanderbeke 107). For Stam (2000), this approach is particularly fruitful when studying an adaptation that is very close to its source, like *The Grapes of Wrath* (20th Century Fox, John Ford, 1940), based on John Steinbeck’s 1939 novel, because it is then possible to highlight that the change in media “generates an inevitable supplement” (55). However, this often leads full circle to one of the problems underscored above: this approach, especially when grounded in a comparative analysis of a canonical source and its adaptation, all too often leads to the conclusion that the original work is superior to the adaptation, and that literature is superior to cinema. For Leitch, “no matter how clever or audacious an adaptation is, the book will always be better than any adaptation because it is always *better at being itself*.” Conversely, the opposite is equally true: the film is also better at being itself (16). Studying media specificity presents the additional danger of adopting an essentialist view of both media, as Baetens (2009) has emphasized:

Without losing any of its relevance—because, whether we like it or not, we always need to know what various media “are,” even if we have abandoned any essentialist ambition in the matter—the debate is now viewed in historical terms: any discussion of media specificity is seen as the symptom of a change in context, whereby the medium in question is required to reposition itself in the media ecology of the moment.

It is thus indispensable to consider the various media in context. When Francis Ford Coppola adapted *Dracula* in 1992, cinema was no longer what it was in 1922 when F.W. Murnau made *Nosferatu*. Comics have likewise evolved in the time between *Sherlock Holmes in the Hound of the Basketballs*, published in *Mad Magazine* in October 1954, and the many Arthur Conan Doyle adaptations that have proliferated since his stories became public domain in the 1980s (Levet 136). The study of the “ontology” of a medium is problematic insofar as any medium is

constantly evolving. The question of media specificity can, therefore, not ignore the medium's history.

The "Mythical" Dimension of the Story and/or its Hero(es)

Michel Serceau posits that the power of the myth on which the source text is founded may be what justifies the numerous adaptations and re-adaptations (64). He then raises the question of what makes a character more or less mythical, and thus more or less adaptable. He remarks that Carmen, Tarzan, Frankenstein and Dracula have often been adapted directly, whereas the shadow of Don Juan merely transpires through the motif of don juanism (84-86): "the recurrence—or even the resonance—of a myth's actantial schema must therefore be opposed to its not being embodied through its character(s)" (89); indeed, an adaptation can also subject itself "to the mythical energy of another text or adaptation" (91). Serceau's thesis relies, then, on the essentialist assumption, identified by Stam, that the source narrative is a "kernel" that can be extracted (10), a topic endowed with an intrinsic configuration (Gaudreault and Marion 31), but it may partly explain why authors like Lovecraft who have invented a cosmogony, characters like Dracula or superheroes from comics^{xxii} are so often adapted. The question of a character's mythical potential is explored by Thomas Faye in his chapter on *El Cid* and is raised by Philippe Bourdier in the conclusion to his article on *Corto Maltese*.

Adaptation as Intertextuality

Adaptation critics and theorists (notably Coremans, Stam, Naremore, Hutcheon, Leitch and Vanoye) now consider adaptation as a feature of the broader phenomenon of intertextuality. Relying on the writings of Mikhaïl Bakhtin and Genette (26-27), Stam describes adaptation as a "hypertext"^{xxiii} derived from a "hypotext" that precedes it, and posits that adaptations are caught up "in an endless process of recycling, transformation, and transmutation, with no clear point of origin" (31); movie tie-ins can even be seen as elements of the "paratext" (Stam 28), as Dick Tomasovic's chapter on film adaptations of Marvel comics evidences. Leitch calls into question the hierarchy implied in the hypotext/hypertext model:^{xxiv} for him, adaptation doesn't so much presuppose a relationship between the intertext and the source text, but rather a relationship between two intertexts, since all texts rely on intertextuality (17); his study of Biblical adaptations, for instance, aims at revealing how the Scriptures, though they position themselves as a "prototext," equally participate in intertextuality (66). However, in order to

avoid a sort of leveling of all texts, Leitch proposes a typology from adaptation to allusion, defining ten postures that a “hypertext” can take in relation to a prior text:

- (1) “celebration.” It attempts to reproduce the source work according to four modes: “curatorial adaptation,” e.g., many BBC adaptations of literary classics; “replication,” e.g., the first version of *Greed* (MGM, Erich von Stroheim, 1924), an adaptation of Frank Norris’s *McTeague* which lasted 23 hours; “homage,” e.g., *Nosferatu* (Jofa-Atelier Berlin-Johannisthal / Prana-Film GmbH, Werner Herzog, 1979); and “heritage adaptation” which evidences nostalgia for the source’s time-setting, e.g., *The Great Gatsby* (Jack Clayton, 1974) (96-97).
- (2) “adjustment.” Leitch contends that this is the most common posture. It implies the necessity to modify the work according to five strategies: “condensation,” “amplification,” “modification,” “updating,” i.e., transposing the story in a contemporary world, and the “superposition” of several sources, e.g., the reference to Shakespeare’s play in *Cleopatra* (Joseph L. Mankiewicz, 1963) (98-103).
- (3) “neoclassical imitation.” It views history in terms of cycles and reprises an old model in order to offer a critique or even satire of contemporary culture. Examples: *Richard III* (Richard Loncraine, 1993), *Clueless* (Amy Heckerling, 1993), based on Austen’s *Emma* (103-4), *Tamara Drewe* (2007), the graphic novel by Posy Simmonds and the movie by Stephen Frears (2010), which transpose Thomas Hardy’s *Far from the Madding Crowd* (1874) to contemporary England.
- (4) “revision.” It evidences a desire to re-evaluate the past (106) and effects what Leitch called a “demystifying critique” (63). For instance, *Mansfield Park* (1999) brings to the fore the slave trade underlying the narrative of Austen’s novel (Leitch 107; Wells-Lassagne [page](#)).
- (5) “colonization.” It involves appropriating the source work and modifying the cultural framework of the story in order to endow it with new meaning (109). On the one hand, these adaptations assert the universality of the story and even its topic, while, on the other, they highlight the cultural and historical specificities of the source and the adaptation. *Ran* (Akira Kurosawa, 1985) and *Bride and Prejudice* (Chadha, 2004) are prime examples (109-10).
- (6) “(meta)commentary or deconstruction.” The adaptation takes on a reflexive posture vis-à-vis its status as an adaptation (111). Examples: *The French Lieutenant’s Woman* (Karel Reisz, 1981) and *Adaptation* (Spike Jonze, 2002) (112-13). Adaptations and remakes tend to limit this posture to their prologue or opening credits, underlining their

relation to the source at least partly for economic reasons. This is the case in the remake *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* (Marcus Nispel, 2003) (Roche 133-35) and in many adaptations of Marvel comics, as Alain Boillat demonstrates in his chapter.

(7) “analogy.” A parallel is established between certain elements of two works (113). For example, the diegesis of *Bridget Jones’s Diary* (Sharon Maguire, 2001) recalls Austen’s *Pride and Prejudice*, but the heroine hardly resembles Elizabeth Bennet (133).

Leitch then refers to Genette’s categories^{xxv} of (8) “parody” and “pastiche” (116), (9) “imitation” (120) and (10) “allusion” (121). These ten postures can be combined in the same adaptation, as in *Romeo+Juliet* (Baz Lurhmann, 1996) (123-25). If Leitch seems to want to identify the various postures a work can take in relation to another, the fact that he calls them “strategies” (123) indicates that they can be wholly intentional on the part of the adapters. Analyzing them may then lead to determining whether or not they are deliberate, and thus assessing the adapters’ degree of success, as well as the coherence of these postures when they are combined. As these “strategies” exist independently of media specificity, it is possible to resort to them to describe the relationship between two works in different media. Thus, in this book, Benoît Mitaine’s analysis of *El hombre descuadernado* proves that the authors’ strategy involves at least three postures: “adjustment,” “colonization” and “(meta)commentary.”

The relationship between adaptation and parody is paramount. The majority of French and Belgium comics and American comic strips tends to be humoristic. For Groensteen (2010), one of the main forms humor takes in comics is parody, a form of intertextuality that is closely related to adaptation.^{xxvi} Adaptation studies generally describe the practice of adaptation as a quasi-surgical transformation (removal, graft, transfusion), which introduces ideological modifications due to the choices made by the adapters, but does not necessarily constitute a deliberately subversive project endowed with a critical intent aiming at bringing about change and destabilizing the norm. Some even seem to view adaptation as bathing in a sort of baptismal grace, making it a neutral process in which works migrate from one medium to another. Conversely, parody, because it introduces a distance or gap, casts a critical light on the hypotext, even when it is considered “inoffensive.” Parody always effects an effort to “demystify the ‘sacrosanct name of the author’ and ‘to desacralize the origin of the text’” (Hutcheon, *Parody* 5). While adaptation is described as a mostly unaggressive^{xxvii} and evolutionary (in the Darwinian sense) cultural practice—“[a]daptation is how stories evolve and mutate to fit new times and different places” (Hutcheon, *Adaptation* 176)—parody, because of its transgressive^{xxviii} potential, is described as “transformative” (Hutcheon, *Parody* 101). Parody is

not intent on patiently adapting itself to contemporary times, but, rather, on adapting modern times to new forms. If adaptation sometimes unintentionally makes way for pastiche, as Baetens argues in the first chapter of this book, parody remains a privileged means of producing a derivative work capable of expressing the tension between homage and critique; adaptation, however, would express, though often unintentionally, the tension between homage and disavowal, as Leitch has argued in his article on remakes (“Twice-Told” 55) and as Alain Boillat contends in his chapter. In the end, parody and adaptation can equally be viewed as symptoms shedding new light on an era but imply divergent intentions: while parody is “a symptom of historical processes which invalidate the normal authenticity of primary forms” (Hutcheon, *Parody* 36), adaptation is a historical process which facilitates the access to a “better understanding of the literary values of a given moment,” as Baetens concludes in the first chapter of this book.

Adaptation and Ideology

The politics of both adapted and adaptation must be taken into consideration in relation to their specific contexts (Stam 42). This approach is dominant in the numerous case studies based on a cultural studies methodology. Dan Hassler-Forest, for instance, argues that *300* (Zack Snyder, 2006) is more reactionary than Frank Miller’s 1998 graphic novel because the film’s Trojan warriors, torn between the threat of foreign tyranny and domestic political corruption (122), also embody the values of the American family (125), while the graphic novel mainly emphasizes “the power of mythological narratives and storytelling in cementing one’s own immortality” (124). Danielle Chaperon deplors that Alan Moore’s critique of Thatcherite Great Britain has entirely disappeared from *V for Vendetta* (James McTeigue, 2005), which offers a less ambiguous subtext in terms of ethics and politics (324); nevertheless, the contemporary transposition operated by the film invites astute comparisons between the Thatcher administration of the 1980s and the Blair and Bush, Jr. administrations of the 2000s, and shows how the figure of V can incarnate revolt against different forms of totalitarian regimes or societies perceived as such—the Anonymous movement’s appropriation of V’s apparel obviously comes to mind. Jean-Paul Gabilliet’s chapter on *Fritz the Cat* (Ralph Bakshi, 1972) in this volume proves that a few years between adapted and adaptation suffice to provide differing political perspectives on a given context, in this case largely stemming from the artists’ different backgrounds. Thus, the subtext of the source text should not be considered as stable. Indeed, Stam (2000) insists on the fact that adaptations can sometimes allow one to re-evaluate the source by “shed[ding] a new cultural light on the novel”^{xxix} (63); for instance, adaptations

of *Robinson Crusoe* from *Man Friday* (Jack Gold, 1975) on have brought out the novel's latent homoeroticism, which was, no doubt, not at all obvious to Defoe's contemporaries (67).

Logophilia vs. Image Culture

Stam believes that a "fourth, related source of hostility to film and adaptations is the obverse form of iconophobia, to wit logophilia, or the valorization of the verbal, typical of cultures rooted in the sacred word of the 'religions of the book'" (6). It is highly likely that comics also suffer from logophilia coupled with iconophobia. Adaptations of text into image could, however, be seen as the sign of changing cultural practices that are both symptomatic and systemic, insofar as they could mark the beginning of a weakening of the very logocentrism upon which the Western world has constructed itself throughout the last millennium. The novel could be the first victim of these changing times, largely weakened by modernity's lack of time and the inexorable advance of multimedia devices designed for images more than words. True, the thesis of the death of the novel and the demise of reading already existed in the 1950s, therefore inviting us to consider with caution the contention according to which "the passage from written stories to image stories could actually be literature's salvation, a sort of sanctuary to survive in while waiting for better times to come" (Baetens,^{xxx} "Roman graphique" 206). It is, however, less disputable that, in the minds of publishers and prescribers (notably the authors and designers of schoolbooks), adaptation serves as a sort of cultural transmitter meant to lead the young reader to the original work (Groensteen, "Fictions" 20). Viewed in this light, adaptation would be nothing more than a "go-between," an "agent" for literature (Baetens, "Roman graphique" 206). Such a view of adaptation is pernicious because it ultimately hierarchizes the arts and considers comics adaptations (and comics in general) as a functional sub-literature. If there is no doubt that "traditional literature" continues to exercise its influence on, and hold over, both comics and even cinema, it is equally true that the hierarchy between narrative arts (high culture vs. low culture) has clearly been following a process of effacement for several decades, as theorists of postmodernism have argued at length (Hutcheon, *The Politics* 18; Jameson 63; Stam 8-10). Though it is possible and even likely that, historically, adaptation has contributed to legitimizing comics, comics adaptations do remain a minor category compared to the thousands of "original" works published every year, unlike the film industry where 40% of the films released in 1998 were, in Naremore's estimate, adaptations (10). Moreover, the multiplication of film adaptations based on comics and graphic novels is a form of consecration, making comics less an indebted, adapting medium than a creative, adapted medium.

The chapters that follow offer both theoretical essays and case studies that explore the questions raised by adaptation and intermediality. Though they focus on European and American comics, we hope some of the theses developed here will also prove useful, notably to studies of Japanese and South American comics. The authors have tried to avoid a binary approach that would involve assessing the gap between the source and its adaptation in terms of the quality or even the “dignity” of the adaptation compared with the original work, and have refrained from reasoning in terms of losses and benefits, or of a hierarchy between hypotext and hypertext. In any case, the adaptations are studied both as specific works and in their media specificity, with comics in the first part, cinema and tv shows in the second. Attention is paid to the forms they take when they betray their lineage and reveal themselves as adaptations, thereby encouraging the reader or viewer to reconsider the source.

The first part deals with comics adaptations of literary texts. The five case studies follow the lead of Baetens’s theoretical chapter by systematically viewing adaptation as a process. Most chapters are grounded in Hutcheon’s definition of adaptation as “an extended, deliberate, announced revisitation of a particular work of art” (170). However, they endeavor to build on Hutcheon’s thesis by showing the extent to which the dynamics of adaptation turn out to be necessary, like the new performance of a musical score, insofar as they redefine the boundary between author and reader. By recalling that the enunciation of any work is always multiple (Baetens), the authors insist that the source is a voice among others in a polyphony that is common to both adaptations and comics, which are multimodal by nature (Faye, Labarre).

The form an adaptation takes is intimately bound to its purpose. In other words, the question “how to adapt?” largely depends on the question “why adapt?” If didactic adaptations are meant to illustrate the classics and facilitate a young readership’s access to them by utilizing as clear a line as possible, they nonetheless represent an intersemiotic enterprise, as they allow the work of fiction to develop through other means than the written word. Thus, because comics represent a multimodal discourse of their own through juxtaposed images and the visual co-presence of different sign systems (Faye, Labarre), they can, for instance, call into question and even undo the established representations of mythical characters (Faye), thereby participating in the work’s inscription within a specific historical context of production and reception (Labarre). Likewise, displaying their own lineage through a network of references that go beyond the source work can enable adaptations to redefine a genre through appropriation, as Tardi has done with noir (Gelly).

Various levels of distance vis-à-vis the source are involved in comics adaptations. Sometimes the adaptation strives to produce a non-figurative image, undermining traditional narration, so that the act of reading is then torn between linearity, on the one hand, and the contemplation of images, on the other, in a process associating global and fragmented reading (Caraballo). In this case, adapting a text into comics leads to the production of a composite object that, because of the nature of the transposition and the dialogue between word and image inherent in the medium, offers the reader multiple points of entry. This hybridity is particularly appropriate for genres like detective fiction (Gelly) and the fantastic (Mitaine), or for more personal works incorporating biographical and autobiographical elements (Caraballo, Mitaine); the freedom involved in producing such works allows for various hybrid strategies.

Most chapters also examine the author's stance by studying the choices made by the adapters, whether they attempt to efface themselves or assert their own personal style, both approaches occasionally merging in a pastiche (Baetens). Paradoxically, adaptation can sometimes allow an artist to "free" himself from the story and concentrate exclusively on his own style (Gelly). From an intermedial perspective, this is but one of the many challenges any medium presents other media with.

The second part devoted to film adaptations of comics shows that they, too, are palimpsests affected by the medium of the source. Sometimes they even offer particular effects that recall the source and introduce a reflexive dimension, for instance by resorting to split screens or various avatars of the freeze frame (Boillat). In many cases, the film attempts to display its composite nature by both referring to the source and relying on its own characteristics, thereby drawing attention to a process of visual creation that can evolve depending on the degree of visual continuity between the various modes of representation. Thus, animation films adapting comics employ specific strategies that distinguish them from live-action films, for instance, by expanding the possibilities of the roughly sketched settings of the original comic book (Bourdier) or by indulging in an experience of extreme hybridity wherein actors animate their own virtual bodies (Floquet).

Whether they be animation or live-action films, these adaptations enable an actualization of the features of the protagonists, who are given voices and bodies, by producing shifting combinations between character, persona and person, a phenomenon reinforced by the relationship established between drawn and embodied characters, especially when the character is imbued with an aura of celebrity, like Fritz the Cat (Gabilliet) or Corto Maltese (Bourdier). Moreover, technical advances can modify the actors' bodies in spectacular action scenes that recall cinema's carnival origins (Tomasovic), the film's special effects and comics source

combining and conflicting to create a new filmic material where human actors, for example, are made less realistic in order to resemble the comic book characters they embody (Floquet).

Adapting a medium that plays on the tension between the autonomy of the individual panel and the juxtaposition of images creates a split in the viewing experience, as well as a tension between homage and disavowal vis-à-vis the source (Boillat). This division can be reinforced when an autobiographical graphic novel and the documentary that adapts it—the Spanish film *María y yo* (Félix Fernández de Castro, 2010) comes to mind—associate various modes of representation—drawing, text, photography—because the didactic intent at their heart calls for the invention of an appropriate form of expression to depict a special individual and reverse the views that person is usually subjected to.

The duality of film adaptations of comics can equally be considered from a historical perspective, when an adaptation mingles fidelity and deviation, introducing ideological changes due to a gap in time and underlying political divergences (Gabilliet). These adaptations are further marked by their respective economic and cultural contexts; indeed, film adaptations are usually required to make a substantial return and attract different and larger audiences than comics. Films characterized by intermediality, especially superhero movies, have emerged since the beginning of the 2000s, due to this policy to expand and renew the audience. The significance of the upheaval of hierarchy and the upsetting of chronology is such that we sometimes have a hard time telling adapted and adaptation apart, all the more so as comics and cinema are no longer the only media involved in these economic and creative principles that involves many industry sectors (Tomasovic, Wells-Lassagne).

These increasingly interactive networks, boosted by mass culture's logic of horizontal integration, produce transmedia stories that integrate reflexive postures within mass audience products. Thus, even a TV show aimed at a wide audience can thematize adaptation by establishing a constant dialogue between the audio-visual source and the comics via the tie-ins present both within the diegesis and in bookshops (Wells-Lassagne). This evolution points to the *raison d'être* underlying any adaptation, a process that should always be analyzed in terms of desire, whether it be that of the author, publisher or producer, or the reader/viewer's desire to re-read, reprise or re-watch works which, caught up in a nexus of several media and genres, never cease to be renewed.

Whether they deal with comics adaptations of literary texts or film and TV adaptations of comics, most of the authors insist on the loss of stable points of reference within what Henry Jenkins calls a convergence culture where it is no longer possible to confine a work to one medium. Today, adaptation seems to be less about transposing a story, characters or a diegesis

from one medium to another, and more about adding to a universe, as in the case of spin-offs and tie-ins, following a practice in which the work seems to migrate in order to adapt and survive within changing production and reception contexts. If some may consider the effacement of the limits between media as a loss resulting in the leveling of the hierarchy between more or less legitimate cultural products, the contributors to this book do not indulge in nostalgia, but insist, rather, on the inventiveness and vitality of these complex and bountiful works.

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ⁱ Eco's article was published in English in 1972 and in French in 1976. In it, Eco examines the narrative and ideological incoherencies of the comic book character, stemming from the fact that the quasi-immortal superman's actions lead him to paradoxically consume himself anyway (16). "A Reading of Steve Canyon" (1964) was published in English in 1976 and in French in 1985.

ⁱⁱ <http://entertainment.time.com/2005/10/16/all-time-100-novels/slide/watchmen-1986-by-alan-moore-dave-gibbons>. Accessed on 22 December 2015.

ⁱⁱⁱ *The Comics Journal*, founded in 1976, publishes interviews and book reviews.

^{iv} See the bibliographies published by Norbert Spehner in 2005, by Jean-Paul Gabilliet in 2010 and by Matteo Stefanelli in 2012.

^v http://www.upress.state.ms.us/category/comics_popular_culture. Accessed on 22 December 2014.

^{vi} The articles by Thierry Groensteen, André Gaudreault and Philippe Marion, Gilles Ciment, Jacques Samson and Benoît Peeters focus entirely or partly on comics.

^{vii} For instance, *Jane Austen in Hollywood* (1998), edited by Linda Troost and Sayre Greenfield, Sue Parrill's *Jane Austen on Film and Television* (2002), and *The Cinematic Jane Austen* (2009), edited by David Monaghan, Ariane Hudelet and John Wiltshire.

^{viii} Gaudreault has suggested that "adaptation" is a "method [*procédé*]," whereas what he and Marion call "transwriting" is a "procedure [*processus*]" ("Variations" 268).

^{ix} The novelization of *Dr. Festus* can be downloaded for free at the following address: <http://www.ebooks-bnr.com/nos-ebooks>. Accessed on 24 December 2014.

^x It is difficult to pinpoint exactly the birth of comics. For Groensteen and Peters (1994), comics started in the 1830s with the Swiss artist Rodolphe Töpffer. Other scholars go even further back in time: Smolderen (2009) points to William Hogart's engravings (from 1732 on); David Kunzle (1973) to the beginning of the printing press and thus to Gutenberg; others go as far back as the Bayeux tapestries or even rock paintings (Altarriba, "Introducción" 10-11). Though Groensteen and Peeters's view is widely shared in Europe, North American scholars tend to see Richard F. Outcault's Yellow Kid as the beginning of comics. If Töpffer had invented many comics techniques, comics became a part of popular culture and mass media in the U.S. at the end of the 19th century.

^{xi} The *Little Nemo in Slumberland* comic strip was first published in *The New York Herald* in 1905. Bud Fischer followed McCay's lead with his *Mutt and Jeff* comic strip, first published in 1911 and adapted in 1916 (Thompson and Bordwell 149).

^{xii} Groensteen disagrees with this view, since he argues that comics have repeatedly proven to be capable of telling a story without words and are thus by no means subjected to their twofold semiotic nature. Thus, he considers comics to be a "predominantly visual narrative form" (*The System* 12).

^{xiii} See, for instance, David Coughlan's 2006 article or Martha Kuhlman's 2009 article.

^{xiv} See, for instance, Sjef Houppermans's 2008 article or Guillaume Perrier's 2012 article.

^{xv} See, for instance, Jacques Samson's 1998 article, Derek Parker Royal's 2006 and 2007 articles, Mary J. Couzelis's 2012 article and M. Thomas Inge's 2012 article.

^{xvi} Ciment notes that many contemporary "film adaptations of comics resort to a musical connotation" (207).

^{xvii} Groensteen seems to use Iser's term in a more restrictive sense. For Iser, the blank is not just a textual one: "it is an empty space which both provokes and guides the ideational activity. In this respect, it is a basic element of the interaction between text and reader" (194-95).

^{xviii} Boschenhoff and Pointner's usage of "focalization" recalls François Jost's redefinition of Genette, that is that focalization corresponds to "the cognitive point of view of the story" (Gaudreault and Jost 130, our translation). The distinction Jost makes between focalization and what he calls "ocularization," i.e., the relationship between the image and the characters' vision (Gaudreault and Jost 130), could be relevant to comics studies.

^{xix} All references are to Stam's 2005 introduction to *Literature and Film*, which is a longer version of the 2000 article published in *Film Adaptation*, edited by Naremore, except if the 2000 text is indicated as the source.

^{xx} Groensteen proposes four types of modifications: of dramatic situations, enunciative situations, characters and of time and place ("Le processus" 276).

^{xxi} For Marion, "mediagenia is, then, the evaluation of a 'range': that of the *reaction* indicating the more or less successful fusion of a narration and its mediatization, within the context—which also comes into play—of the horizon of expectations of a given genre. Assessing the mediagenia of a story, thus, implies attempting to observe and apprehend the dynamics of an interfertilization" (86). It could be said that Marion's notion is somewhat essentialist, but it is tempered in the following lines: "The *mediagenic treatment* thus designates how a media might

have encountered the facet of that great story which best suited it. And vice versa” (87). We would like to insist on the word “facet,” which implies not so much an adequateness between the story and its medium, but rather between the story and *the way that story is approached* through this medium. Creative possibilities are, then, freed from the threat of essentialism.

^{xxii} For Eco, Superman has, from the start and by definition, all the characteristics of the mythic character (“The Myth” 15).

^{xxiii} These terms are defined by Genette in *Palimpsests* (5).

^{xxiv} Stam actually agrees with Leitch, as he insists that the writings of Jacques Derrida invite us to call into question the notions of “original” and “copy” (8), but he does not carry the idea to its logical conclusion.

^{xxv} See chapters I to VII of *Palimpsests*.

^{xxvi} It seems that a work’s status as an adaptation is, above all, determined on a pragmatic level. Saying that a parody is a parodic adaptation would, then, be a question of quantity: parodying just a sentence or a scene would not necessarily be considered an adaptation.

^{xxvii} This view should be qualified when an adaptation aims at denying or entirely supplanting its source.

^{xxviii} Parody is only partially transgressive because, as Hutcheon notes (*Parody*, 101), it is always at the same time transgressive and conservative insofar as it repeats (and respects) a part of the adapted work. Parody would, therefore, have more to do with subversion.

^{xxix} This idea can be related to Arthur C. Danto’s contention that the art world is characterized by “the retroactive enrichment of entities” (583). Jean-Marie Schaeffer furthers this idea when he argues that, “as soon as an innovative work introduces a new artistic predicate, all prior existing works are automatically attributed the opposite predicate” (142-43, our translation). Both Marie-Claire Ropars-Wuilleumier (135) and Groensteen (“Le Processus” 277) develop this idea in *La Transécriture*.

^{xxx} Note that Baetens is merely evoking this theory which he distances himself from by cautiously resorting to the conditional mode.