

THREE GENRES VS ONE ARTIST
A CASE STUDY OF DENIS VILLENEUVE'S FILM
ADAPTATIONS



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BY

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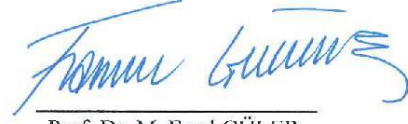
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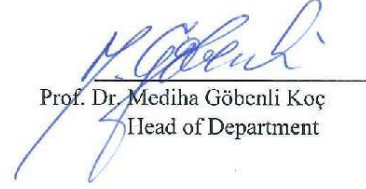
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This dissertation seeks to bring a fresh air into the long-forgotten discussion of adaptation studies with a multidimensional lens from both literary and a cinematic point of views. Focusing on Denis Villeneuve who have successfully managed to adapt three different literary genres to the screen, the dissertation takes each adaptation alongside its source material and analyzes both with a concept that is very much prevalent in Villeneuve's filmography. Although being related, the concepts are specific to each chapter with the works they were employed in. Evaluated in regards to their fidelity or betrayal to the source material up until recently, film adaptations require much deeper reading in which they are analyzed as unique artwork where the responsible artist expresses himself in the context of the work's creation. Therefore, the relationship between the film adaptation and the literary source material should be regarded as a mutually beneficial way of communication, and not as a battle for superiority. The artist responsible for the adaptation process has the key role at this point. As the focal topic of this dissertation, films of Denis Villeneuve as adaptations of three different literary genres are examined through the motifs of the chronotope, the doppelganger, and repetition. The purposeful concentration over one artist enabled the thesis to achieve its aim of highlighting the phases gone through when it comes to different literary genres during the adaptation process of literature to cinema.

Keywords: *Chronotope, Doppelganger, Repetition, Literature and Cinema, Adaptation Studies, Intertextuality, Auteur Theory,*

Bu tez çalışması uzun süredir rafa kaldırılmış olan adaptasyon çalışmalarına yepyeni ve çok yönlü bir bakış açısı getirmeyi, edebi ve sinematik okumaları birleştirmeyi amaçlamaktadır. Üç farklı edebi türü ustalıkla perdeye aktarmayı başaran Denis Villeneuve' ü merkez alan bu çalışma her bir filmi temel aldığı edebi eser ve Villeneuve'ün tüm filmografisinde rastlanabilen birer konsept ile birlikte ele almaktadır. Birbiriyle oldukça bağlantılı olmalarına rağmen, her bir konsept alakalı olduğu film ile ayrı bölümlerde incelenmektedir. Günümüze kadar kaynak esere olan sadakat ya da ihanet üzerinden değerlendirilmekle kalan film adaptasyonları, sorumlu sanatçının içinde bulunduğu şartlar ve kişisel tercihlerini yansıttığı özgün birer sanat eseri olarak okunmaları gerekmektedir. Bu sebeple, film adaptasyonunun edebi kaynak ile olan ilişkisi basit bir üstünlük savaşından öte, iki sanatın karşılıklı fayda sağlayabileceği bir iletişim yolu olarak görülmelidir. Adaptasyondan sorumlu sanatçı bu noktada en önemli rolü oynamaktadır. Bu tez çalışması söz konusu olduğunda, Denis Villeneuve'ün üç farklı edebi türü perdeye yansıttığı filmleri sırasıyla kronotop, ikizlik (doppelganger), ve tekrar (repetition) terimleri kapsamında incelenmişlerdir. Tek bir sanatçının odak noktası olarak seçilmesi tezin amaçladığı edebiyatın sinemaya aktarılış sürecinin farklı edebi türler söz konusu olduğunda ne tür aşamalardan geçtiğinin de altını çizmeyi sağlamıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: *Kronotop, İkizlik (Doppelganger), Tekrarlama (Repetition), Edebiyat ve Sinema, Adaptasyon Çalışmaları, Metinlerarasılık, Aucteur Teorisi,*

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1. INTRODUCTION

“I think that the best way to respect an author is to be very honest about the way you adapt it. Totally destroy the original and make it your own.” - Denis Villeneuve

Stories are forged in the minds of the artists who allow themselves to submerge into the profound, hidden reservoir of their lifetime experiences, well-aware of their creative influence on every artistic decision. The true purpose of storytelling is to transpose the practice from mere narration of events to a cathartic instrument in the service of mankind, to create for the spectator/reader an impression, a moment of reality where it all comes together and makes sense. Cinema and literature are tools for storytelling that form a synthesis of the human capacity for dreaming. Finding a connection in a piece of art that is all pervasive, melting the universal with the personal may be safely categorized as the best summary of Denis Villeneuve’s cinematic art. The French-Canadian filmmaker is the author of works that haunt the viewer through mirroring of the world and simultaneously displaying the rawness of the human condition. He claims that:

The thing is that questions. I love when cinema brings questions in your head, in your heart. I like movies that stay with me for days, for weeks. That’s the beauty of cinema when you create images, and those images create emotions and questions inside yourself and you bring with you to home. Makes you think about the World. Those are the movies that I love and that’s what I would like to do as a filmmaker.
(Villeneuve, 2016)

The strength of Villeneuve is his ability to control information. Regulating the audience’s reach for information, especially through visual storytelling, is the task of any

filmmaker. However, Villeneuve places larger emphasis on the elements that the audience do not have visual access to. The secret is that he has mastered the art of locating the perspective from which he can most fruitfully exploit the viewer's expectation, via simultaneously veiling and unveiling just a fraction of information. The atmosphere of Villeneuve's films stems from the unknown, from objectively presenting events that seem destined to happen.

Although his filmography contains many original screenplays including his debut film, Villeneuve is an artist who does not shy away from adapting literary works. In fact, what separates Villeneuve from many other filmmakers who are interested in adaptations is his ability to develop ideas and create a higher level of meaning by combining the source material with his originality. No theme introduced is wasted. Manipulating an already warped perception of time and space, the filmmaker manages to form similar yet remote temporal and spatial principles which reflects itself not only in the film, but also in the relationship between the adaptation and the source material. In its capacity of an emerging tie between past and present, an adaptation calls back to the source text not only content-wise but also in terms of its contextual time and location. Thus, it brings into existence a new life form in total alien circumstances but somehow it preserves the inextricable bond between the two arts. Hence, the adaptation becomes the perfect medium for the exploration of the concept of 'chronotope'. Although connected to literature and the development of the novel, the concept of chronotope can be defined as the artistic expression of the close link of temporal and spatial relationships, and can be successfully applied to cinema and adaptation.

Adaptation occupies a crucial position in the contemporary media industry. Ranging from graphic novels being turned into television series to modern visual reimaginings of classic characters, adaptations of one medium into another constitute the

deep drive behind the entertainment industries. Film adaptation of literature, in particular, has become a distinct genre in its own right, spreading over a territory involving both film and literary studies. Undoubtedly, much of the debate revolves around commercial factors. Studios prefer spending millions of dollars on projects that have proved successful in one medium because they count on the already existing large fanbase. Although this duality might seem like an advantage to some, in reality, hybridity is not welcomed in conventional artforms. Despite some scholars considering film adaptations as the defining genre of American film production (Cartmell, 2010; Leitch, 2008), the transposition of one story among mediums has stirred up debates centered on topics such as fidelity, betrayal and superiority, generally favoring the literary source material. No matter how innovative, unique or close to the literature the film turns out, the one lingering question is about whether the “essence” was kept on or not. Additionally, the visualisation aspect of cinema has also been perceived as derogatory for limiting the imagination of the reader/viewer into concrete images, which may potentially destroy subtleties. The infertile discussion surrounding a literal translation has undermined the discourse’s potential and ignored the power of intertextuality. In order to bypass the issues Dudley Andrew suggests evaluating adaptation as a “complex interchange between eras, styles, nations and subjects” (Andrew, 1984)

Adaptations trigger debates on alterations regarding society, cultural opinions and human self-perception. The context of the adaptation largely influences the story adapted and gives an opportunity to a different artist to utter their own perspective while paying homage to the source material. Linda Hutcheon remarks, “whatever the motive, from the adaptor’s perspective, adaptation is an act of appropriating or salvaging, and this is always a double process of interpreting and then creating something new” (Hutcheon, 2006).

Despite its reduced significance in the context of film studies in general, adaptation studies is also a relatively popular discourse, especially in the recent years with the cinema industry leveling off. As far as mainstream filmmaking is concerned, Hollywood has constantly validated the approach of preferring novels over any other literary genre as a base for feature length films. However, much of the attention is given to the novel genre as the home base of adaptation practice, leaving the other literary genres that are adapted less explored. Although the analysis of novel adaptations definitely broadened the dialogue, providing a foundation to adaptation studies in terms of methodology, it also resulted in an uneven structure within the discourse. While there are some upsides to the cinematic product not stemming from a novel adaptation, this fact does create an invisibility cloak over the film and prevents the art and the artist from their rightful recognition in the adaptation arena. With all the progression in film studies and literary studies, as well as intertextuality, the time has come to go deep into the adaptation processes of different genres and the response they receive in contrast to novel adaptations.

In this thesis, the practice of adaptation will be analyzed through a case study of three film adaptations whose author is Denis Villeneuve. The approach will be intertextual and the themes most explored will be ‘time’, ‘doppelganger’ and ‘repetition’. Each of the films is an adaptation of a different literary genres; the first of a short story, the second of a novel, and the third of a play. Each film will question the genre’s position in the larger discourse of adaptation. Following the theoretical framework, the concept of time will be analyzed in the first chapter through Villeneuve’s 2016 film *Arrival*, an adaptation of Ted Chiang’s short story, *Story of Your Life*. The second chapter will focus on 2013’s *Enemy*, a reimagining of Jose Saramago’s novel *The Double* and will investigate the motif of doppelganger in the works, as well as a metaphor for the

discourse. The final chapter will be an analysis of the notion of repetition and cyclicity with Villeneuve's *Incendies* (2010) adapted from Wajdi Mouawad's acclaimed play *Scorched*.



2. CHAPTER ONE: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

“No other art form is able to fix time as cinema does. Therefore, what is film? It is a mosaic made with time.” - Andrei Tarkovsky (1984)

Storytelling is an integral human urge that has been treasured to pass on information and emotions through generations in an attempt to take a stand against time, voiced in many shapes and forms. Literature, being one of the oldest of those forms, has influenced and lead the way to the arts that came after it. As René Wellek claims, “... the arts are in constant interrelationship, as are all human activities.” (Wellek, 1942, p. 1) The youngest of the arts, cinema, has had a love-hate relationship with its predecessor; literature’s impact on cinema has been controversial since the invention of the latter, although both arts are essentially modes of expression. The interrelationship with each other brings about various questions about the validity of cinematic expression.

As the theoretical framework of the thesis, this chapter will focus on adaptation theory, as an artist’s outlet of ideas and emotions that combines two artforms; literature and cinema. The standpoint will be far from a form or content analysis, but rather an intertextual reading of the use of similar thematic devices between the two arts aiming to explain the mutual bond, specifically by the same adaptor. Although the main works that are chosen for the thesis are from three different literary genres, a short story, a play and a novel, the present chapter will not identify them separately but rather tackle the issue of adaptation by examining literary texts as a whole. Dipping into the adaptation theory, it is apparent the main literary focus has mostly been on the novel, less on the plays, and almost none on short stories. This uneven structure of adaptation discourse and the priority of illuminating the discourse as a whole, led the distinct nature of what each literary genre brings about to the discussion of adaptation to be examined more

thoroughly in the following chapters. Before diving into genres and themes, it is vital to understand how the relationship between literature and cinema came about.

Filmmaker and film theorist Sergei Eisenstein argued in 1944 that the American Cinema sprung from the Victorian novel tradition, in its “attention to visual detail, empirical psychology, atmospheric close-ups, alternating omniscient and character viewpoints, and shifts from one group of characteristic to another, all shaped Western film techniques, which in turn influenced and shaped film art more generally.” (Elliott, 2004, p. 4) Elliott here asserts that the relationship between cinema and literature is more than just an influence, but more so a transformation. The Victorian novel **turned into** film, and the path of the novel proceeded in another channel, both in structure and in cultural shape. (Elliott, 2004, p. 5) The effects Victorian novel had on cinema continued up to the 1950’s thanks to the Hays Code prevented the adaptation of Modernist novels with their “obscene” and “indecent” content and gravitated towards prude Victorian novels. As Naremore explains:

Even after the qualified relaxation of censorship restrictions in the 1950s, the most adaptable sources for movies were the "readerly" texts of the nineteenth century rather than the "writerly" texts of high modernism, which were explicitly designed to resist being "reduced" to anything not themselves. (Naremore, 2000, p. 4)

The evident impact literature had on cinema did not end with Victorian novels giving birth to the traditional narrative structure of films, but continued rapidly in the theory of film employing many of the vocabulary and language used by literary theorists starting with terms like “work”, “author”, “poetics” etc. Literary ideals that a text is produced by individual using certain techniques were imprinted on cinema. As Casetti explains:

These notions focus on the presence of an individual's work and simultaneously, on the fact that a text testifies to it; they emphasize the unfolding of personal actions and a personal universe, and the additional idea of being the repository of the text's deepest identity. (Casetti, 2004, p. 81)

The most apparent type of relationship that films and books have is the practice of adaptation, since their bond is of a very visually apparent one. From afar, a natural relationship seemed to have flourished between literature and cinema; so many films were based on best-selling novels, said novels acquired financial gain from those adaptations since the popularity of the film adaptation caused a rising in the sales of those novels; and the literary terminology was employed by filmmakers to define filmmaking. However, in reality, the issue of adaptation stirred up opposing ideas over the ability of cinema to adapt the words of literature. Even after a hundred years since the invention of cinema, with all the technological and cultural changes, literary stories are still being employed and told and retold by filmmakers to mass audiences. "Adaptation has always been central to the process of filmmaking since almost the beginning and could well maintain its dominance into the cinema's second century" (Welsh, 2007, p. 13).

George Bluestone, the first person to properly address adaptation as a theory in *Novels into Film: The Metamorphosis of Fiction into Cinema* of 1957, characterized the tie between the two arts as "overtly compatible, secretly hostile." (Bluestone, 1957, p. 6) This description confirms the claims that their similarities are only on a superficial level and the discrepancies are more rooted and deep. However, André Bazin saw the concept of adaptation as a vital part of all arts, let alone being illegitimate (Stam, 2005, p. 255). This opposition between the views of literary and cinema theorists went further. Where Leo Tolstoy spoke of film as "a direct attack on the old methods of literary art", which forced writers to "adapt" their writing to this emerging medium (Stam, 2005, p. 4);

Roland Barthes promoted the cinematic image, claiming that it had symbolic value and was a signifier without signified (Bonilla, 2015, p. 41).

Marginalized by both of the practices it is related to, *film* adaptation of literature is accepted as a hybrid form that is bastardized like no other. Although adaptation as a concept is a common practice in the history of arts under the pseudonym of “borrowing”, which is basically where the artist draws inspiration or employs the material of an earlier product to create hers (Andrew, 1984, p. 98); “based on a book”, for some reason, sounds like a derogatory phrase when it comes next to a film, but not when it is, for example, a painting. According to Robert Stam, “Adaptations are seen as parasitical on literature; they burrow into the body of the source text and steal its vitality (Stam, 2005, p. 8) Although the transformation of one text into another is common among all arts, film adaptations of literary works are still on their way to prove themselves in the eyes of the public and academia. They are detested to the level that the terms employed describing film adaptations of literature in criticism range from “infidelity” and “deformation” to “betrayal” and “violation”, hinting that adapting a literary work to the art of cinema is like a **treachery** to the art of literature. George Bluestone, confirming this idea, notes that “the novel is a norm and the film deviates at its peril” (Bluestone, 1957, p. 5) In this manner of thinking, literature represents certainty whereas film adaptation is a parasite that threatens the sanctity of the art.

Answers that are commonly given by the public as to the reason of supremacy of the written word vary from “literature gives your mind creative freedom” and “the characters are much deeper”, to “books are more detailed” and “the films are way too commercial”. These statements clearly ignore the fact that an author’s perception and storytelling is manipulating the mind, differently, but just as much as a film does; the details that are conveyed in a book only through words are distributed and multiplied in a

film through cinematography, sound mixing, production and costume design; moreover, financial aspects and restraints of literary world are every bit as dominant as in cinema, perhaps not as much in the public eye. Challenging the inherent supremacy of literature over cinema, the philosopher Gilles Deleuze saw cinema as a philosophical tool by itself, expressing thought not just in language but in audiovisual terms with motion and duration. He dismisses the idea that cinema, unlike philosophy and literature, is “incapable of thought” (Stam, 2000, p. 10).

Adaptation analysis has mostly been carried out by critics from an English Literature perspective, meaning that they tended to prioritize the literary text over the adaptation. Therefore, they preferred the slow and -subjectively- more troublesome process of reading over the instantly satisfactory and -seemingly- easier to consume pleasure of film. Interdisciplinary scholars mostly went for the formal contrast between literature and film as the main measure rather than “their cultural, intertextual and social interchanges and affinities” (Elliott, 2004, p. 5). Judging from a formal perspective, they supported the supremacy of literature, therefore any adaptation of literature in the shape of a film was deemed inadequate and unnecessary. Gabriel Miller argues that “the novel’s characters undergo a simplification process when transferred to the screen, for film is not very successful in dealing either with complex psychological states or with dream or memory, nor can it render thought” (Miller, 1980, p. 13). His ignorance on the formal and narrative structures of cinema led him to conclude that literature is somehow better at manifesting inner judgements and desires and psychological traumas. By ignoring the visual, verbal and audial means that cinema can present thought, this viewpoint encourages the favoring of literature as a higher artform.

In the same vein, Bluestone also notes that “the film, having only arrangements of space to work with, cannot render thought, for the moment thought is externalized it is no

longer thought” (Bluestone, 1957, p. 47). The same could easily be said of theatre, but Bluestone seems to be overlooking that. On stage, every thought has to be externalized as well, one could easily claim that Shakespeare was unable to create deep characters. Artforms besides literature tend to lean more on subtle inferrible thought, based on mannerisms, metaphors and symbols; just because they are not openly written down does not mean they are any less profound. Cinema has its own merits in conveying the inner struggles of human life, not only through dialogue and the actor’s performance but through color, production design, cinematography, framing, pacing, sound and music.

Robert Stam argues “Literature (...) has often been seen as a more venerable, more distinguished, essentially more ‘noble’ medium than film” (Stam, 2000, p. 12). Apparently, a lot more difficult to create, too. Cinema was seen as easier to produce, distribute and consume with the help of lots of people and money, next to writing which was seen as a lonesome and grueling activity. The fact that literature is usually produced by a single individual, allegedly frees it from any financial concerns therefore leads prioritizing aesthetic values, contributes to its status as “high” art, while a film is a collaborative product, bound by financial aspects. The ingrained conception that watching a film takes less effort than reading a novel does not help either. In fact, even the production of a film has been undervalued as unlaboured than writing a book, for the “director merely films what’s there.” These views ignore the fact that watching a film is actually very much like reading a book, since in both cases what matters is what one understands from what is seen or read. The burden of deciphering the meaning of a written text is not that much different than that of film. The production of a film is a collaborative and a very demanding type of work that takes much time and costs a lot. After all, time is money, right? The money aspect of filmmaking leads the artists involved in the production to be bound by the feasibility of money, both in the quality of the

production and the time spend. The claim that both the production and the consumption of cinema is fuss-free, is ignoring physical as well as perceptual labor of the art of cinema (Stam, 2005, p. 7).

As shown above, there are multiple preconceptions supporting the already existing rivalry between the two art forms. So, the question to be asked here is why literature's superiority taken for granted? Thomas M. Leitch says:

Entrenched representational forms have always greeted new rivals with a suspicion amounting to hostility, especially if economic power is at stake, as it was in the rise of the novel as the predominant mode of entertainment for the rising middle class two centuries ago. (Leitch, 2003, p. 8)

After the noted popularity of the novel in the Victorian era, where it was the entertainment equivalent of television, cinema swooped in as the entertainment novelty of the masses. The popular culture scene hasn't been the same ever since. With a new film, came a new film theater and popularity of cinema grew and grew, whereas literature began to acquire an idealized status. According to Pena-Ardid, this fastly gained popularity was due to cinema's appeal to the masses, which resulted in cinema's belittlement and lack of prestige as most mass-addressing popular arts encounter, compared to literature which was regarded "more subtle and precise" since "it allegedly demanded a kind of intellectual effort from its readers that film did not require from its spectators" (Bonilla, 2015, p. 135). Cinema, as Stam brilliantly observes, can said to be degraded by the company it kept, and this class problem also contributed to its already lower status. Adaptations were deemed even worse, since they were seen as the "dumbed down" versions of high literary works, fit for an audience that is vulgar enough to settle for "cotton candy of entertainment to the gourmet delights of literature." (Stam, 2005, p. 7).

Traditionally speaking, purity in the formation of an art has been better valued than hybridity. Therefore, in their eternal rivalry, cinema and literature were pitted against their semiotic and aesthetic purity. This absurd race for alleged purity drove hybrid arts to pose as, and sometimes take the deserted place of, a pure art. The appropriation of the lingo of pure art to cover up their hybridity became a means of justification for the formation and the survival of the hybrid art's prestige (Elliott, 2004, p. 5). Cinema's efforts to "validate" its position as a legitimate artform in the eyes of others, apparent in academia since 1920's up until 1980's contributed to the above mentioned incidence of cinema theorists employing terms such as "author" and "narrative", illustrating just how cinema is trying to cover up its hybridity by utilizing literary words into its practice and theory (Casetti, 2005, p. 81).

At this point, Robert Stam argues that the superiority of literature to its film adaptation comes from a "historical **anteriority** and **seniority**: the assumption, that is, that **older** arts are necessarily **better** arts" (Stam, 2005, p. 3). Referring to McLuhan's concept of "rear view mirror", he asserts that arts gain prestige with the passing of time; hence the art of literature inherently surpasses the recent art of cinema. "Here literature profits from a double priority: (a) the general historical priority of literature to cinema, and (b) the specific priority of novels to their adaptations" (Stam, 2005, p. 3). Thus, the hybridity of the adaptation turns into a double disadvantage. They are not only the "copies" of their source material, but they are also less of films, since adaptations are not as "pure" and "original", they lack "representational fluency on (their) own grounds" (Elliott, 2004, p. 5). This inferiority caused by lack of originality argument is humorous to think about if one considers the case of William Shakespeare, almost all of whose plays are adaptations of earlier texts. That said, whatever Shakespeare did is generally viewed favorably in the eyes of critics. While Titanic was criticized for trying to appeal to every

demographic, containing romance, class problems, action sequences, period drama aspects and VFX all at once, Shakespeare is praised for doing just the same (Leitch, 200, p. 8). Cinema's supposed inferiority to literature only adds to the even lower status of adaptation. Adaptation is the bastard son of a hateful relationship that neither of the parents like to lay claim to.

Leitch claims that according to Shakespeare defenders, the originality of Shakespeare lies in his ability to find a gem, to detect a valuable source material and transform it into a masterpiece. He is not an adapter per se, but an alchemist (Leitch, 2003, p. 16). However this claim does not modify better adaptations as something other than an adaptation, nor does it claim that literary figures are the only ones immune to the title of "adaptor", for the likes of Orson Welles and Stanley Kubrick and, most notably, Walt Disney seem to have full ownership of their adaptations under the umbrella of "auteurism" (Leitch, 2003, p. 16). In fact, just as George Bluestone argues, the problem does not lie in adaptation either, for what really matters is the success of the product in the eyes of the public. When the adaptation is successful, there is no discussion of the faithfulness of the work to the source material. "If the film succeeds on its own merit, it ceases to be problematic" (Bluestone, 1957, p. 114).

The core reason why adaptation is tossed around like a ping-pong ball, is the ancient rivalry between words and images that scholars argued over. Although poststructuralism demolished this idea of an opposition in other areas of art, the belief in opposition between words and image is still going strong, as was supported by the likes of Roland Barthes, and Michel Foucault, J.H Miller and W.J.T Mitchell (Elliott, 2004, p. 1). Barthes argues "there is never a real incorporation since the substances of the two structures (graphic and iconic) are irreducible", and Miller supports this by adding, "Neither the meaning of a picture nor the meaning of a sentence is by any means

translatable. The picture means itself. The sentence means itself. The two can never meet.” (Elliott, 2004, p. 1). Mitchell adds, “The history of culture is in part the story of a struggle for dominance between pictorial and linguistic signs.” (Elliott, 2004, p. 1) The rivalry between word and image formed the core of the relationship between cinema and film, resulting in the bizarre place of adaptation.,

Gottfried Ephraim Lessing, who shaped George Bluestone’s ideas of adaptations, analyzing this well-accepted rivalry between words and images, identifies painting as an art of natural signs, manifesting spatially and statically, while he depicts poetry as an art of conventional signs, presenting temporally and sequentially. In this view, Lessing argues that the two modes expression should limit themselves to their own arena, poetry representing temporal action while painting to static bodies in space. Influenced heavily by this distinction, Bluestone separates the literary word as “conceptual, linguistic, discursive, symbolic, inspiring mental imagery, with time as its formative principle”, while the film is seen as “perceptual, visual, presentational, literal, given to visual images, with space as its formative principle” (Elliott, 2004, p. 2). Bluestone maintained the belief in the separation between literature and cinema, basing this on their differences in their stances in time and space.

Clearly, the inter-art relation between literature and cinema has been problematic from the start, as theorists loved to compare the two by likening them to their forefathers. Therefore, the possibility of a dialogue resulting in mutual benefit has been mostly out of the question. But isn’t an adaptation a new form for the source story to feed on and survive? And more importantly, is it possible for the “story”, the “essence” to exist in a virgin state, free from any mode of expression that can be transformed “well” into another state of existence? This is a significant question to think about, considering the fact that adaptation discourse revolves around the idea of “fidelity” to this so-called “essence”.

This idea claims that there is a set-in-stone story out of all context which materialized itself in the art of literature, and it is the adaptors' duty to carry over that story intact to the medium of cinema. Any film that fails to do so, which is called an "unfaithful film", is unsuccessful. This approach ignores that not all features of a literary work are adaptable to the medium of film.

Apart from the issue of fidelity, which will be addressed after, the common area that the two arts are held up against is related to their differences in their form. When the content is seemingly similar, as in the case of a film adaptation of a literary work, their structural differences stand out. Umberto Eco says that literature and cinema are both arts of action, the former is narrated and the latter represented. As Stam adds "... each art form has uniquely particular norms and capabilities of expression.", which is known as medium specificity. It is claimed that the comparison between the two arts starts with their distinct matters of expression (Bonilla, 2015, p. 134). What he means by that, with their ability to give shapes to personal ideas, feelings and how a person's inner desires materializes themselves in a certain medium.

Adding to the medium specificity approach, Robert Stam advocates a post structuralist model, outlining their formal differences in the "track" format as literature having only one, but film having five tracks (Nelson, 2010, p. 8). According to Stam, literature consists of language whose matter of expression is writing, while cinema has moving photographic image, recorded phonetic sound, recorded noises, recorded musical sound and writing. Basically, the cinematographic qualities of a shot include "not only what is filmed (*mis-én-scène*), but also **how** it is filmed." (Bordwell & Thompson, 2003, p. 1) Apart from the mentioned cinematography, framing and the duration of the shot, sound can also be added as an indispensable element in cinema. Therefore, cinema seems to address at least two different senses, which cannot be said of literature. Stam adds,

“(…) it could… be argued that cinema, precisely because of its heterogenous matter of expression, is capable of greater complexity and subtlety than literature. Cinema’s audiovisual nature and its five tracks authorize an infinitely richer combinatoire of syntactic and semantic possibilities. The cinema has extremely varied resources.” (Stam, 2005, p. 10)

Thus, an adaptor’s duty is to take what is written in a one track medium and transform it into a format where five different tracks will be in motion all at once.

It is argued that literature is more than just letters on the text as well, which is partly true. “Reading is seeing in the mind”, claim Wellek and Warren, calling it the notion of verbal picture (Wellek & Warren, 1956, p. 5). Therefore, written words create an image in the mind of the reader, which stands for literature’s verisimilitude. People read through their internal wants, needs and dreams, thus forming the content of the literary work as “visuals” in their minds. This causes some critics to define literature as a multitrack medium as well. However the film is undoubtedly more resourceful as it can be said to have a more vital heterogeneous nature, which is not the case for literature. Everyone imagines and “sees” a different version of the same literary text in their minds, so that literature’s visual aspects are internal and more subjective than that of cinema’s.

As mentioned before, much of adaptation theory has focused on the discourse of “fidelity”. As McFarlane confirms, “discussion of adaptation has been bedevilled by the fidelity issue” (McFarlane, 1996, p. 8), which in itself has dead-ends that adaptations of literary works cannot seem to escape. If the film adaptation is faithful to the source, it is deemed “unoriginal”, “uncreative” and “lazy”; if it is unfaithful, then it is being disrespectful. There starts the conundrum. Besides, what does “faithful” even mean? The idea of a true, faithful adaptation is absurd as everyone who reads a novel, reads it through their own internal wants, fears and dilemmas and envisions a different version in

their minds, which by definition is a subjective version. Therefore when someone says “I thought the book was better”, actually means that what I imagined in my mind was better than that of director’s.

Brian McFarlane’s criticism of fidelity discourse is as follows:

Fidelity criticism depends on the notion of the text as having and rendering up to the (intelligent) reader as a single, correct “meaning” which the filmmaker has either adhered to or in some sense violated or tampered with. There will often be a distinction between being faithful to the “letter” (...) and to the “spirit” or “essence” of the work. (This) involves not merely a parallelism between novel and film but between two or more readings of a novel, since any given film version is able only to aim at reproducing the filmmaker’s reading of the original and hope it will coincide with that of many other readers/viewers. Since such coincidence is unlikely, the fidelity approach seems a doomed enterprise and fidelity criticism unilluminating. (McFarlane, 1997, p8. 9)

Fidelity discourse suggests that a good adaptation is a kind of translation that translates what is written into visuals while protecting the “essence” of the said source text. So, the adaptation is like a substitute for the absence of the source text in the new medium. According to fidelity, the less differences there are between the two texts, the better the adaptation. In this sense, the best adaptation would be the repetition of the same source material, which is redundant. Why should time, money and energy be wasted, if the final result is replicating what was done before? Would anyone even bother adapting a text into a film, when they have nothing new, interesting or personal to say about it? If the best adaptation is as close to the source material as possible, is a reprint of the same work the best “adaptation”? Was *Psycho* (1998) the same as *Psycho* (1960), really? Also, because everybody’s interpretation of anything is unlike one another, it is impossible to

translate a text on screen word by word, anyway. Apart from financial aspects, filmmaking involves more people who make choices in the making of the adaptation, unlike literature where usually a single individual is responsible for the artwork. In other words, fidelity is not only impossible to achieve but also undesirable when it comes to a film adaptation, for cinema is a multitrack medium that requires decisions made by a number of people, as established earlier.

Perhaps the search for an ‘original’ or for a single author is no longer relevant in a postmodern world where a belief in a single meaning is seen to be a fruitless quest. Instead of worrying about whether a film is ‘faithful’ to the original literary text, we read adaptations for their generation of a plurality of meanings. (Cartmell, 1999, p. 28)

Fidelity approach sees the filmic adaptation as a supplement of the literary text in a new art. As Palmer says, “In the familiar terms of poststructuralism, the traditional study of filmic adaptation treats to the screen versions as a possible supplement to the literary text.” (Palmer, 2004, p. 262) In reality, adaptation as a practice, suggests multiple contexts therefore multiple authors.

Let alone the creative differences in which filmmakers might differ from the author of the novel, filmmaking is an utterly different artform than literature. While writing only takes a paper and a pen, films are a lot more expensive and toilsome. Therefore, an author might write free of any budgetary constraints as those get involved later on in the distribution process, whereas a film’s existence depends on money all the way through. To quote Robert Stam:

While it costs nothing for a novelist to write ‘The Marquis left Versailles Palace at 5pm on a cold and wintry day in January 1763’, the filmmaker requires substantial

sums in order to stage, for example, a simulacral Paris (or to shoot on locations) to dress the actors in period costume and so forth. (Stam, 2005, p. 16)

In this sense, fidelity becomes unpractical as well as undesirable, for not everything written on the page that sounds good would look the same on screen.

The one apparent problem with fidelity discourse is that it assumes the “translation” of the text to a new medium somehow alters and damages the “original”, where in fact nothing even touches the source text while adapting it. Novelist Raymond Chandler was asked about how he felt about what Hollywood had done to his novels, he responded “My novels? Why, Hollywood hasn’t done anything to them. They’re still right there, on the shelf” (Burroughs, 1992, p. 15). And this is indeed the case. An adaptation is a new formation, completely independent from the source text. No adaptation, no matter how “faithful” it claims to be, can be turned back, reversed to create the source material exactly. It will always be a different creation than the source material. This might assert the superiority of the source material over the adaptation, but at the same time it suggests the freedom of the adaptation from the source material for it can choose to relocate whatever element it deems appropriate.

The claim that the adaptation is an “equivalent” of the source text and its author’s style in a new medium is also preposterous, as Stam agrees, “(...) in fact, there can be no real equivalence between source novel and adaptation” (Stam, 2005, p. 18). When a literary work is adapted into a film, the adaptation becomes a different thing, just like “a historical painting becomes a different thing from the historical event which it illustrates” (Bluestone, 1957, p. 5). An adaptation is not a supplement for, nor it is the equivalent of the source text in the new medims, for they are created by different people with different backgrounds, under different circumstances, with different tools. This does not mean one medium of expression or one product of expression is necessarily better than the other.

Each creation has its unique properties that distinguishes it from the other, therefore claiming one is better is just as meaningless as comparing Hagia Sophia with Queen's "We Will Rock You".

A significant point that is missed is that all films made might actually be considered adaptations, for adaptations can have subliterate or paraliterate sources. After all, almost all films are based on a written text, a screenplay. Therefore the relationship between written word and cinema is not specific to adaptations but is an inherent quality in the formation of the art of cinema. In a poststructuralist view, Julia Kristeva's concept of intertextuality is a vital element in grasping how texts are structured and how they work culturally; and, intertextuality studies not just texts, but more so the relationship that texts have (Palmer, 2004, p. 258). So, intertextuality and a close relation to a written text is a vital element in all kinds of cinematic productions, not specific to adaptations. This is significant because adaptation discourse means speaking of two texts all at the same time, making adaptation discourse intertextual by nature. As Robert Stam states, "Adaptations in a sense make manifest what is true of all works of art- that they are all on some level 'derivative'. And in this sense, the study of adaptation potentially impacts our understanding of **all** films" (Stam, 2005, p. 45).

Art is the imitation not of nature, but rather of other arts. The creation of a film happens because of the influence of the existence of other films, books and paintings. Therefore arts are in intertextual dialogue constantly, throughout history. To think of a work of art free of any bond or connection is impossible, as Bakhtin meant by his "hybrid construction". Adaptation, in this sense, is a typical hybrid construction, blending not only two different art forms but the artistic expressions of countless artists all around the same story. Complete originality in art is neither possible nor desirable. Because

originality in literature is unattainable, betraying that originality through an unfaithful adaptation is nonsensical.

Speaking more generally, the move away from the ‘work’ to more diffuse notions like ‘textuality’, ‘écriture’, and ‘literary’ facilitates a retracing of boundaries which allows for more inclusive categories, within which adaptation becomes simply another ‘zone’ on a larger and more varietal map. (Stam, 2005, p. 9)

From a Derridean perspective, the “copy” is a means for the “original” to survive and there is no rigid hierarchy between the two. Instead of damaging the place of the original, copies actually strengthen the originality, since without the copies there would be no concept of the original. Thus, a film adaptation, a “copy”, of the source material does not fall short of the literary text, the “original”. The Derridean understanding of originality and copy is literally true in relation to adaptation, for every original is a copy of something earlier (Stam, 2005, p. 16).

Originality holds quite a strong place in the theory of adaptation, but not so much in cinema studies in general. The reason for that is that cinema studies, unlike adaptation theory, has abandoned aesthetics as its leading methodology, and is focused more on analytical and theoretical criticism (Leitch, 2003, p. 17). Adaptation studies might actually help cinema studies realize that all texts are intertexts, in that all texts quote or involve pieces of earlier texts. As Roland Barthes suggests, texts contain different fragments from earlier creations with or without realization and usually without the intention of duplication the source material. Barthes’ claim that “narrative is international, transhistorical transcultural: it is simply there, like life itself” (Barthes, 1977, p. 79). depicts a unifying approach, embracing cinema, history, painting and literature as narrative. What differentiates adaptations from cinema studies in general, is the fact that it embraces two different artforms under the blanket of intertextuality, mingling literature

and cinema, creating a more elastic and less defined form. Evaluating every text carrying pieces of different texts help to focus on the dialogue between works where neither is necessarily the source material no matter how canonical one might be, and what matters is the light that each of them shed onto each other (Onega and Gutleben, 2004, p. 9).

From a Bakhtinian perspective, adaptation “is an inseparable part of culture and it cannot be understood outside the total context of the entire culture of a given epoch.” (Bakhtin, 1986, p2). Intertextuality helps adaptation to avoid the fidelity pits. “Mutual illumination” not only assists cultures to discover themselves in the eyes of another culture; but can be read in the sense of adaptation, for “It is only in the eyes of another medium, one might add, that a **medium** reveals itself fully and profoundly” (Stam, 2005, p. 364). Therefore, adaptation studies do not only benefit cinema studies, but can be helpful in literary studies as literature can understand and define itself better through the eyes of an adaptation of itself.

Robert Stam argues that too much of the adaptation discourse has dealt with the subjective issue of the “**quality** of the adaptations, rather than on the more interesting issues of (1) the theoretical **status** of adaptation and (2) the analytical **interest** of adaptations” (Stam, 2005, p. 3-4). Instead of focusing on formal similarities and differences, or fidelity of the adaptation to the source material, the analysis should be focused around a thematic analysis and how a new artist handles the same theme in the light of a new medium. Adaptation is an artistic expression, not a rereading or a rewriting, but a reappearance of a component, a theme that simply appeared elsewhere before, as Casetti puts forward. Whether the reappearance resembles the earlier creation is not relevant at this point, for the new creation happens in a different time and space. What matters is not the fidelity in the form or in the context to the earlier work, but the

adaptation's status as a whole in the new medium. "In fact, the text's identity is defined more by this role and this place than by a series of formal events" (Casetti, 2005, p. 82).

An analysis solely focusing on the formal aspects of the two texts is not sufficient enough for adaptation theory. In other words an analysis of an adaptation should do more than just a form or content comparison. Carrying over the story to one medium to the other does more than just a alteration in the formal structure. As Casetti says, "There is something else going on, something deeper; the fact that the source text and its derivative occupy two entirely different places in the world scene and in history." (Casetti, 2005, p. 83) The focus should be more on the two works' context and the dialogue between them. Casetti brings about the concept of displacement while discussing adaptations, for adapting a literary text to the screen changes the location and the background of the said text. It changes the text's location from one space and time to another, creating a wholly new context and meaning behind it. Thus, the importance of the analysis should not just lie in the text but also to the conditions of its existence. This space time relationship that adaptation inherently carries in itself makes the discourse an appropriate ground for the application of Bakhtin's concept of chronotope.

Influenced by Albert Einstein Theory of Relativism, Mikhail Bakhtin, in his essay, "Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel", comes forward with the concept of "chronotope", to define "the intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships that are artistically expressed in literature" (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 84). and theorizes chronotope in relation to literature and to the development of the novel. Bakhtin tries to manifest how

[i]n the literary artistic chronotope, spatial and temporal indicators are fused into one carefully thoughtout, concrete whole. Time, as it were, thickens, takes on fesh,

becomes artistically visible; likewise, space becomes charged and responsive to the movements of time, plot and history. (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 84)

With chronotope, Bakhtin puts together a historical development process where the experience of time and space is better represented in the novel. As Vivian Sobchack notes, “chronotopes serve as the spatiotemporal currency between two different orders of existence and discourse, between the historicity of the lived world and the literary world (here, the world of cinema)” (Sobchack, 1998, p. 150).

Bakhtin’s concept of chronotope enables us to understand the inner workings of notions of time and space in both literature and in cinema. Summarized as “the necessary relation between time and space in the novel”, the chronotope helps the reader to understand the spatio-temporal presences in the novel. The chronotope assumes that stories “take time”, but they also “take space”, avoiding the dilemma **between** time and space. Just as in literature, the concept of the chronotope’s use is very proper for the medium of cinema as well, where time and space elements are tangled to create a complementary unit. Just as literature, film can be said to provide a concrete ground where time forms a visible mould that becomes a vital part of cinema; and where space continues its integral role as time shapes the formation of the narrative and plot.

All adaptations are chronotropic for they are reworkings of an earlier text, which does not mean that the adaptation is merely the duplication of the source material. They are the reappearance of the story in a different time and place. In addition, cinema as a practice, is capable of multiplying times and spaces. To begin with, a film is usually shot on more than one locations, at different times, as in sometimes days apart, and these are later edited together forming another time and space in itself; therefore a film has the ability to mix up diverse temporalities and spatialities. Also, the multitrack nature of film and the techniques that are employed adds to the chronotropic structure of cinema. Sound

and image can awaken different senses of time and space in film all the while forming a union used together, for example, a static shot accompanied with a music would give the feeling of a time passing. The appropriateness of cinema for the concept of chronotope proves itself when diversified cinematic techniques create a number of times and spaces in a diagetic sense, like a superimposition of images doubles time and space in a shot, so does editing and putting multiple frames within an image (Stam, 2005, p. 14).

Although the concept was put forward with literature, specifically novel, in mind, the chronotope is even more suited to the film medium. After all, as Bakhtin says, “The image of man is always intrinsically chronotopic” (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 84). Even Bluestone, unknowingly, supported the concept of chronotope on the issue of adaptation. He argued that both literature and cinema are time-space arts, while, he claimed, literature’s formative element is time, the cinema’s is space. To him, both literature and film created an illusion and, at times, distorted the understanding of time and space (Bluestone, 1957, p. 35).

As an emerging tie between past and present, an adaptation calls back to the source text not only in the content but also to its contextual time and location, and brings into existence a new life form in total alien circumstances but somehow with an already existing knot between the two arts; hence it becomes the perfect medium for concept of chronotope to be explored in. In the forth coming chapters of the thesis, my aim is to analyze the relationship three distinct literary genres have with cinema in relation to adaptation discourse, applying three different concepts of the time, the doppelganger and repetition as the main thematic ties, the time being the focal concept of the first analysis. A short story, a novel and a play adaptation, all belonging the French-Canadian filmmaker Dennis Villeneuve, will present how the mutual relations the two arts have can

result in the art of filmmaking all the while dealing with time and space in unusual formats tangled up with unusual motifs.



3. CHAPTER TWO: A non-zero-sum game of adaptation

“There are days that define your story beyond your life.”

It was the year 1998, when the Canadian author Ted Chiang, who describes himself an “occasional writer”, published *Story of Your Life* (1998), the story that would make him globally famous in the science fiction genre. Chiang had written original short stories and been awarded before; nonetheless *Story of Your Life* marked a new chapter in his writing career, bringing him three prestigious science fiction awards; The Nebula, The Theodore Sturgeon, and the Seiun. The story explores the complexity of human nature through its narrator, Louise Banks, a linguist recruited by the government to help communicate with “heptapods”, the extraterrestrials that have landed on earth whose idea of language is unlike that of humans and very much in line with their perception of time. Having the idea from his interest in variational principles of physics combined with humane questions about joy and grief, the originality of the story is conveyed through Chiang’s clever use of language and narrative structure aligned with the elements of the plot. Written in five years, the story affected readers for its rarity and humanity intertwined with an unconventional plotline and linguistic complexity, raising questions about free will and determinism. *Story of Your Life* became a distinct piece of literature among the works of its genre and established Chiang’s fame as an “humanist science-fiction writer” (Rothman, 2017, p. 1). Similarly to all literary works that draw public attention, *Story of Your Life*’s success prompted a film adaptation. Paralleling the creativity of Chiang, the adaptation was born from the hands of the gifted Canadian filmmaker Denis Villeneuve under a new name, *Arrival* (2016).

Science fiction is a genre that has been deemed very “cinematic” for its aptitude for visual spectacles, interesting characters and storylines. From novel adaptations like

Scott's *Blade Runner* (1982) and Spielberg's *Jurassic Park* (1993), to short story adaptations such as Kubrick's *Space Odyssey* (1968) and Cuarón's *Children of Men* (2006) cinema history is filled with successful films based on science fiction pieces. The availability of the genre to narrate stories of utopias and dystopias reflecting on the current status of the global events, and converting them into a narrative filled with human emotions and conflicts deem the genre very high in demand for filmmakers. As Robert Stam agrees, "Each recreation of a novel for the cinema unmask facets not only of the novel and its period and culture of origin, but also of the time and culture of the adaptation." (Stam, 2005, p. 45) One might think it is natural for such an award winning science fiction story as *Story of Your Life* to be turned into a box-office-success. However, in reality, the process of adaptation was far from "natural". In fact, *Story of Your Life* was deemed unfilmable for its narrative structure and the difficulty of the subject matter even by the author himself. Chiang says he was surprised when he was first approached by the producers of *Arrival* in 2011, because he thought, "it's not a story that seems like an obvious candidate for adaptation." (Chiang, 2016) The legitimate reasons for the adversity of the adaptation will become more clear as the pages go on.

Eric Heisserer, the paladin screenwriter of *Arrival*, was fascinated with Chiang's writing when he was introduced to it back in 2005, finding it "both intellectually invigorating and emotionally true" (Heisserer, 2016). Captivated by the emotional core, Eric Heisserer took up the short story without giving it much thought into how the story would crack into a screenplay. However, soon he discovered that it was "nearly impossible to turn it into film" (Heisserer 2016). Considering that Heisserer had written mostly horror scripts for remakes and sequels up to that point, like *The Thing* (Van Heijningen Jr, 2011) *Final Destination 5* (Quale, 2011) and *A Nightmare on Elm Street* (Bayer, 2010), and the fact that *Story of Your Life* itself was a tough pill to swallow; it

took a while before Heisserer could find a company to produce the film, five years to be specific. Even after that, it would take another five years until the final film hit the theatres in 2016.

Like all other works of cinema, film adaptations of literary works are a product of a collaborative effort. While the screenwriter might seem responsible for the structure and the progression of the story, the elements written by her might change when the production begins, due to inconvenient circumstances or creative differences. Conversely, while the cinematographer might seem in charge of the look of the film, that can be altered by the colorist later in post-production. Despite all these, there is one person whose duty is to oversee the project from start to finish, making the important decisions that will result in the final film and that is the director. Nothing can be altered without getting the-go ahead from the director of the project. Regarding *Story of Your Life*, Eric Heisserer was the pioneer starting up the adaptation process. Seeing the potential in Chiang's words, Heisserer was the one to turn the highly intricate structure of the story into a screenplay. However, working very closely with Heisserer was the director of *Arrival*, Denis Villeneuve, whose adaptations are the main focus of this thesis and whose vision is behind the final product that is *Arrival*.

There are many key differences between the script and the final film. A lot of what is in the script was cut, altered or rearranged in order to fit Villeneuve's vision. By focusing the story on Louise's personal journey, Villeneuve ensured the exploration of what it means to be human through her character arc. Heisserer remarks confirming this, "We waited for Denis. Because nobody else really fit (the project) the way he did." (Heisserer, 2016) Auteur theory argues "the director as the main creative force behind a film, who imprints the material with his or her own unique personal style, vision and thematic preoccupations" (Desmond & Hawkes, 2005, p. 45) and claims that capable

directors evolve to display “a recognizable stylistic and thematic personality, even when they work in Hollywood studios” (Stam, 2000, p. 84). The most famous example of an auteur director who is also very familiar with the concept of adaptation, Alfred Hitchcock once explained in an interview with François Truffaut: “What I do is read a story only once, and if I like the basic idea, I forget about the book and start to create cinema” (Truffaut, 1986, p. 71). Villeneuve is another director whose talent and artistic abilities shine through in whatever project he conducts. Enjoying artistic control over his productions, the filmmaker takes power at his hands to create a truth out of lies. Although he always collaborates with strong names such as legendary cinematographer Roger Deakins, Villeneuve believes in his own abilities from beginning to the end, and rightfully so. Speaking of what he thinks when he first approaches the screenwriter Villeneuve comments, “I am gonna be a traitor. I will stab you in the back. I will not respect. I will change things definitely. It will become my movie” (Villeneuve, 2016). However he takes a dissimilar approach towards adaptations than Hitchcock did. Villeneuve believes adapting a literary work gives the filmmaker a responsibility and confirms that about *Story of Your Life* saying, “I wanted to respect that story. I wanted to give it all its power. And my respect for Ted Chiang” (Villeneuve, 2016). Admitting that *Story of Your Life* was a tough text to adapt and praising Eric Heisserer for doing that he continues, “I don’t know how to crack that short story. Because it’s very intellectual in a strong and beautiful way. But from a dramatic point of view, it is a bit difficult to articulate. Because it’s about process.” (Villeneuve, 2016)

Before examining *Story of Your Life* and its film adaptation *Arrival*, it is necessary to look at the place short stories occupy in the larger discourse of literary adaptations. Although one of the first ever literary adaptation in cinema history was Georges Méliés’ *Cendrillon* (1899) adapted from the short story of *Cinderella* (1697) by Charles Perrault,

the field of adaptation consists mostly of film adaptations of novels, given the fact that the narrative structure of cinema followed up the Victorian novel tradition, both historically and formally (Elliott, 2004, p. 4). As for the mainstream filmmaking, Hollywood validated the approach of preferring novels over any other literary genre as a base for feature length films for several reasons. First and foremost, novels are deemed more popular than short stories. “The industry’s own appraisal of its work shows a strong and steady preference for films derived from novels” (Bluestone, 1957, p. 3). After all, the best-sellers are almost always novels, thus it makes sense for an industry such as Hollywood to go for the option that is guaranteed to earn them box-office success. People who have read the book usually wonder what the words would reflect to the screen. Not only that, but it is also assumed that basing a film on a novel will bring the “prestige” of the literary text to the production of the film, thus elevating the final cinematic product in the eyes of the public and critics. No matter how original the idea that a short story puts forward, it still is a risk for the producers to go for a story that is known by enough people to fill up a classroom compared to the novel-reading stadium, which adds to the invisibility of short stories among other literary adaptations.

Secondly, novels are longer pieces of literature narrating events taking over a period of time, consisting of many characters, plots and subplots, which are simpler to apply to a feature length film. Hollywood deems novels easier to adapt for the formation of a mainstream film, since the latter is closely related to the structure of a novel. A novel comes with an original idea and a definitive plotline including conflicts and side stories that do not need much alteration in terms of length. A novel’s adaptation process is much simpler compared to a short story, since the narrative structure of a novel is what shaped the root of the mainstream film. Traditionally, a page of a screenplay corresponds to a minute of a regular feature length film, which in theory means a ninety-page novel would

translate to a ninety minute film. Therefore, the changes needed for a novel to be transformed into a film are deemed not that drastic whereas the compactness of short stories cause for a lot of alteration and additions in order to produce a ninety-minute film out of a forty-paged text.

The similar lack of visibility of short stories apply to their place in the larger theory of adaptations, as well. Just like that of the Hollywood, academic studies on adaptations focus largely on feature length film adaptations of novels rather than any other genre (Naremore, 2000, p. 10). The fact that films based on novels are marketed as such in order to generate profit from the popularity of the novel contributes to their limelight in the adaptation discourse. Films based on novels become much more prominent in the eyes of the public as adaptations, because of their marketing. The targeted audience for novel adaptations are mostly those who have read the book. In order to seek their attention, the film is advertised as the film version of the said book; whereas marketing a film based on a short story they tend not to mention that it is an adaptation simply because they think no one would care. Therefore those who work on the intertextual study of adaptations tend to overlook any other genre than that of novel when choosing a topic for analysis. The lack of advertisement for films based on short stories as “adaptation” causes that aspect to go unnoticed for many filmgoers and critics. Even those who have read the short story and would appreciate a film version do not realize that the work is adapted into a film since it is rarely mentioned in the marketing. Not having enough research on short story adaptations had lead to Thomas Leitch saying, ““No critic to my knowledge has claimed that short stories are better than movies.” (Leitch, 2003, p. 8).

There are upsides to being immune to the label of “adaptation”. As discussed earlier, fidelity has been an issue taken very seriously among adaptation critics. However,

when it comes to film versions of short stories, the expectation of fidelity drops drastically. Mentioned above, short story adaptations go unnoticed as adaptations. It is as if they were secret agents walking among the discourse, unseen. Therefore, no one questions their fidelity since no one knows. Fidelity is only a problem when the source is known. Additionally, novelistic adaptations are scolded, for they usually cut out aspects of the novel in the process of adaptation, causing them to divert from the based material. As Robert Stam says, "... adaptations today, typically still trim down events in the novel to produce a film of 'normal' feature length. Many filmmakers, in this spirit, 'streamline', the novel by focusing on certain characters and events rather than others" (Stam, 2005, p. 34). However, because short stories are *short* and it is more accepted that in order to adapt a short story to the screens in a feature length, additions have to be made to the story, meaning that the story has to be expanded to some extent. Therefore, digressing from the source material is not frowned upon, but actually recognized as inevitable.

In definition, there is no specific measurement in terms of length for a piece of writing to be identified as a short story. To differentiate short stories from novels, the former can be read "in one sitting" according to Edgar Allan Poe in *The Philosophy of Composition* (Poe, 1846, p. 3). Although the meaning of "one sitting" varies from person to person, it is fair to say that short stories are in fact "short" and are much more self-contained, compared to novels, that is. According to Science Fiction and Fantasy Writers of America, the short story is under 7500 words while a novel is 40,000 words or over (Science Fiction and Fantasy Writers of America, n.d). Taking into account that one page of a screenplay would correspond to a minute in a film, there needs to be a lot more words in a short story to fill up a ninety-minute screenplay. That is to say, short stories do not cover enough material for a feature length film to be made out of them, even if they are adapted page by page. Therefore additional aspects such as characters, events, settings

or themes, are compulsory when adapting a short story into a feature length film. The perk of it is that while critics may complain about the loss of substance about a novel adaptation, that is rarely the case for a short story adaptation. There are added-ins but rarely any losses.

Since additions are expected and accepted during an adaptation process of a short story, filmmakers take the liberty to add in not only narrative and technical novelties but stylistic ones as well. Alongside new storylines, characters and themes filmmakers act creatively in the visual execution, sometimes departing from the source material. This causes the final film to be a product of another artist who, instead of compressing a longer material, has altered the literary text into a new interpretive creation all together. Expectation of alterations can give the filmmaker artistic freedom in every decision, therefore short story adaptations can said to be more derivative and unique to their creator than a novel adaptation would be allowed to be. Nevertheless, the fact that additions are expected and a filmmaker *can* take these liberties does not mean that the alterations will be condoned by the audience. Even though they would be more open to additions, those who have read the story would still expect the filmmaker to have met their own set of expectations, as in the form of setting, characters, atmosphere or “essence.” No form of adaptations seem to be lucky enough to escape that.

Although expansion of a short story may seem liberating for the filmmakers, it does carry its own disadvantages. Adaptation of a literary text into a film is a toilsome activity in itself. A lot has to be taken into consideration from pre-production until the post. However, a short story adaptation process is usually disfavored from the pre-production phase. To begin with, getting the project off the ground for a short story adaptation is not as easy. As established, not only are short stories not as popular therefore cannot guarantee a devoted audience that a novel would, but without a skilled

screenwriter involved in the project to get the short story feature-film ready, the adaptation would be a disappointment from day one. One might say that screenwriting is an important and challenging task for novel adaptations as well and that is true, however adapting a short story requires an additional set of skills. While a novel adaptation might require change in the story due to creative or media differences; changes in a short story adaptations are compulsory additions to make the story work as a film. Expanding an already existing and completed story with new characters, new incidents, new conflicts and storylines in harmony with the pre-existing elements in order to create a coherent whole is definitely easier said than done.

Researching on the subject, one comes across lots of filmmakers of adaptations claiming that their source material was deemed impossible to turn it into film. *Contact* (1997) screenwriter James V. Hart commented “I believed it was un-adaptable” (Hart, 2016) while Stephen King claimed he “didn’t really understand how you make a movie out of it” speaking of *The Shawshank Redemption* (1994) (Heidenry, 2014). Although they might all seem like boasts of championing their way to decipher a literary work, what can actually be gathered from these assumptions is that adaptation is hard work and every source material brings about different struggles for filmmakers. Therefore, there was no surprise when Villeneuve and Heisserer of *Arrival* claimed that *Story of Your Life* had been shelved for years for its unsuitability for the big screen and that they only overcame hardships through diligence.

Story of Your Life is narrated by the protagonist, linguistics professor Dr. Louise Banks, addressed to her daughter on the night her daughter is conceived, in the form of an apostrophe. As she narrates, Louise reminisces past and future, alternating events from the arrival of the aliens called the “heptapods” on earth and the process of learning and mastering their language to her unborn daughter’s life and her eventual death. Clearly,

Story of Your Life is an unconventional short story. Even for a sci-fi short. Ted Chiang's construction of the story mirrors the main theme, not only in the authentic plotline but in the innovative narrative structure and the use of language. The language aspect of the story is very central in becoming the vessel to convey the main theme across. Not only is it utilized as a technical innovation but thematic as well for as Louise interacts with the heptapods and learns their language, she also begins to acquire their worldview and sense of time. Chiang has formulated his writing style in a way that would accompany this intricate structure of the short. Here is an example of what is meant from the very beginning of the story:

"I remember the scenario of your origin you'll suggest when you're twelve." (Chiang, 1998, p. 1)

This sentence sums up the complex time perception of *Story of Your Life*. Although the story takes place on the night of the conception of her daughter, Louise speaks to her, mentioning an incident that will happen when the daughter is twelve years old. She uses the word "remember", a word that is used in relation to past events, in reference to the future. At the same time, saying "you'll suggest", confirming a future occurrence. And mind you, the narrator tells the story on the night her daughter is conceived. So, how can she *remember* something that hasn't taken place yet?

The heptapods of *Story of Your Life* have two distinct forms of languages; one for the spoken, one for the written and there is no correlation between what is spoken and what is written. The spoken language, Heptapod A, has free word order and "many levels of center-embedded clauses" (Chiang, 1998, p. 17) and the written language, Heptapod B, is *semasiographic*, meaning that "It conveys meaning. It doesn't represent sound" (Villeneuve, 2016). Heptapod B, which is the form of language that is essential to the plot

of the story, is non-linear orthography consisting of “semagrams” that are like intricate graphic designs, which might translate to a word in our language system. The Heptapod B is without a forward or a backward direction and free of time. In the story, the heptapods do not write a “sentence” with one word, or semagram, at a time but draw the whole sentence simultaneously, meaning that they should know how the entire graphic design would be like before even writing it. Shaped by their language, the heptapods’ worldview is unlike that of humans. They do not live through events sequentially, but perceive everything all at the same time. So basically, heptapods’ understanding of physics and linguistic are so intertwined with each other that their language gives them access to past, present and the future. Hence their ability to know how the sentence will turn up before writing it all at once. As Louise gets a better hang of Heptapod B, she starts to acquire their worldview, meaning that she also perceives all that has happened, is happening and will happen at the same time. Mastering Heptapod B rewires Louise’s brain and she begins to think like the heptapods, the phenomenon known as the Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis. Thus, unlike some critics’ interpretation, Louise does not become a time-traveller and *Story of Your Life* is not a time travel story. By learning and internalizing Heptapod B, Louise acquires their way of seeing the world, that is, not in causality but in the understanding of teleology. Just like Heptapod B, Louise’s perception of time has no backwards or forwards direction and reveal itself all at the same time without a progressive order.

The employment of the tenses in the story is very much related to the progression of the events. Chiang finds a way to incorporate the heptapods’ notion of time by employing English words to embody the feeling. The “present” time, which is the night Louise and her husband conceive their daughter, is told in the present tense, while the arrival of the heptapods, Louise’s introduction to them and their interactions up until they

leave are told in the form of a flashback with the past tense as they all happened in the “past”. The interactions with the daughter all throughout her life up until her death, are told in the form of flashforwards with the “future” tense as the daughter is not even conceived yet. Because all these “present”, “past” and “future” events are all like “memories” to Louise as she perceives them all at once, she interfuses the tenses while narrating. Although Bakhtin claims the “intrinsic connectedness” of time and space being a vital part of every narrative (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 84), with *Story of Your Life* that bond becomes visibly apparent to the reader and cannot be separated from the events of the story. In a chronotopic manner, the story intertwines time and space with the language spoken, letting the reader experience the thought, emotion, perception and logic, just as the past, the present and the future all at once. This is a brilliant way to tell and reflect this complex and creative story.

From the flashback and flashforward memories, the reader learns that Louise marries the physicist working with the military alongside herself, Dr. Gary Donnelly, from whom she has her daughter, and later on, she divorces. Unfortunately, their daughter dies from a rock-climbing accident at the age of twenty-five. Inside a science fiction story with technological advancements and extraterrestrial life forms, the author manages to depict a human life journey. Love being found and lost, all the memories in between whether joyful or painful, are expressed in this very human alien-story. Above all else, with *Story of Your Life* Chiang explores the idea of determinism and free will. By creating a new species with different perception of life and time, the author questions human perception of life and puts forward a new concept. Louise explains,

“Knowledge of the future was incompatible with free will. What made it possible for me to exercise freedom of choice also made it impossible for me to know the future.

Conversely, now that I know the future, I would never act contrary to the future,

including telling others what I know: those who know the future don't talk about it."

(Chiang, 1998, p. 33)

The fact that Louise is able to know what will happen and cannot do anything to change the future puts forward the idea that the acquisition of this new language and non-linear perception alters one's understanding of causality. In the story she asks "What if the experience of knowing the future changed a person? What if it evoked a sense of urgency, a sense of obligation to act precisely as she knew she would?" (Chiang, 1998, p. 29) After mastering Heptapod B, Louise leaves linear thinking and concept of choice behind and embraces a teleological manner of thinking. Now that she knows what future holds, she is unable and unwilling to try to change it. She starts internalizing the fact that she is a mere actor in a larger storyline. What is conveyed in the story is the paradox of free will and determinism, like that of Harry Potter and Voldemort in that "neither can live while the other survives." (Rowling, 2003, p. 841) Chiang summarizes the theme of *Story of Your Life* by quoting Kurt Vonnegut from the introduction to the 25th anniversary edition of *Slaughterhouse-Five*:

Stephen Hawking. . . found it tantalizing that we could not remember the future. But remembering the future is child's play for me now. I know what will become of my helpless, trusting babies because they are grown-ups now. I know how my closest friends will end up because so many of them are retired or dead now. . . To Stephen Hawking and all others younger than myself I say, Be patient. Your future will come to you and lie down at your feet like a dog who knows and likes you no matter what you are. (Vonnegut, 1994, p. 2)

Because language is at the center of it, the story gets its theme across through its use of language as well. Chiang's innovative utilization and merge of tenses to give the

reader the feeling of time as Louise experiences it, is an original idea, even for a sci-fi story. After all, stories told in the future tense are quite rare, especially when they are narrated as memories (Bordwell, 2016, p. 1). Alongside the technical aspects, what makes *Story of Your Life* so **alien** is how the narrative is structured in order to create the sensation that the protagonist feels and get the main idea across to the reader. As mentioned before, as she narrates the story Louise switches from event to event from past and future, sharing with her daughter the significant incidents in her own life. Although the present time of the story is on the night of the conception of her daughter, the beginning of the main plot is when Louise is recruited to help a team of scientists to understand the reason behind the seven-limbed aliens' (hence heptapods) arrival. The heptapods do not actually land on earth, they orbit around earth and the communication is administered through mirror-like screens called "looking-glasses". Therefore the spaces inhabited by the species are separated from each other, influencing the overall atmosphere. The progression of the research of the heptapods is narrated with intercuts of Louise's "memories" from the future with the daughter from when she is a baby, through her teenage years, up until her death. Although the future memories with the daughter are not narrated in a chronological order, the memories with the heptapods are. The past memories are in a sequential order as she had not learned the language yet, but the future memories are not. Time is never set but always flowing, although it is not abstract but very concrete. Chiang constructs the progression and the order of the events so that everything is in line with Louise's life course and the pivotal change she experiences.

Story of Your Life is a profound tale of losing one's child. It just happens to have aliens surrounding it. The author unfolds a humanistic response to the inevitable with a frame of science fiction narrative, incorporating variational physics. As Chiang confirms, "the story is about choosing to go ahead with life, even though there will be pain in the

future as well as joy” (Chiang, 2002). Aware of her child’s eventual death Louise embraces it all, believing that free will is part of an earlier linear world and adopts a deterministic approach and accepts all that comes her way. She says, “The existence of free will meant that we couldn’t know the future. And we knew free will existed because we had direct experience of it.” (Chiang, 1998, p. 29) What makes *Story of Your Life* so extraordinary is how Chiang manages to tell a story of such emotional depth and intellectual weight incorporating innovative narrative techniques all the while making it feel so effortless.

All of these elements taken into account, it is not hard to understand why *Story of Your Life* was deemed “an unlikely candidate for adaptation.” (Chiang, 2016) While a director is the one who uses the lens as a pencil to “write” the film as Alexandre Astruc argues, then the screenwriter is the one who uses the pencil to “shoot” the film claims Ben Stoltzfus (Rizzo, 2007, p. 1). As discussed earlier, the screenwriter Eric Heisserer was the one captivated by the story and volunteered to turn it into a screenplay on spec. Heisserer describes his passion for the story saying, “The end of the story just had me bawling and I knew at that point I wanted to share that feeling with the world. And I didn’t worry so much about the fact that it wasn’t inherently cinematic in its original form.” (Heisserer, 2016) He spent five years pitching the idea to producers until 21 Laps picked up the project. Despite having enticing elements for Hollywood producers such as seven-limbed creatures with seven lidless eyes; the story’s chronologically elaborate and physics/linguistics-packed plotline alongside the original but complex utilization of language might have scared them all off. To be fair, although the idea of a science fiction film might sound appealing at first, *Story of Your Life* is a compact story that does not have inherent franchise-potential qualities and has an unconventional conflict-free plotline with a confusing non-chronological structure requiring intellectual knowledge

and/or interest from its audience. Without a skillful execution, the prospect of a film adaptation to be successful would not be high and most studio producers would not take that risk, not to mention the common anxiety about female protagonists flopping at the box office among Hollywood producers.

To be fair, cinema can said to be quite familiar with non-chronological orders. Flashbacks, flashforwards and non-linear narrative order are frequently used in modern day cinema all over the world, both in mainstream and independent Works. Some examples would be *Intolerance* (Griffith, 1916), *Rashomon* (Kurosawa, 1950), *The Mirror* (Tarkovsky, 1975), *Pulp Fiction* (Tarantino, 1994), *In the Mood for Love* (Kar-wai, 2000) and the list goes on. In a traditional manner, when a time shift happens in a film, either a flashback or a flashforward, cinema utilizes its own tools. While in literature a time shift is ensured via a tense switch, in cinema changes in time are cued with zoom-in and then a dissolve, music accompanying the mood or the time period, a narrator or a character commenting or dialogue. Some films choose to employ jump-cuts between time periods (*Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*, Gondry, 2004), some include title-cards (*500 Days of Summer*, Webb, 2009), or a past scene might have a different color grading (*Kill Bill Vol I&II*, Tarantino, 2003), or a different aspect ratio (*The Grand Budapest Hotel*, Anderson, 2014) or with a simple voice-over indicating the time change (*Citizen Kane*, Welles, 1941). However, adapting *Story of Your Life* into a screenplay, Eric Heisserer opted for something different. To be able to discuss the implementation of the time changes, it is necessary to look at the story structure.

“Legendary” Hollywood mogul Samuel Goldwyn once said, “Some novels read like scenarios. Look at *Rebecca*. *Rebecca* reads like a scenario. But not *Wuthering Heights*.” (Bluestone, 1957, p. 17) *Story of Your Life* might not be a novel, however it sure does fall under the same category as *Wuthering Heights* in Goldwyn’s comparison,

for its aptitude for a transition into a screenplay. Classical narrative structure in cinema relies mostly on action (Bordwell, 2007, p. 1). Traditionally, the protagonist is the character whose actions supply the drama with its arc. Although character-centered narratives can be just as intriguing and involve action in its own right, conventional plot mechanics in cinema still revolve around action and some sort of conflict to further the plot. According to David Bordwell, there are three dimensions to the narrative structure of a film; that is story world, plot structure and narration. (Bordwell, 2007, p. 1). For a conventional film to work, these elements need to be arranged in time.

Despite its original idea and elements, *Story of Your Life* is an inner dialogue. The story takes place inside the protagonist's mind and none of the action that is in any of the storylines, whether it be the interactions with the heptapods or the life of the daughter, have *conflict*. When asked about his process of adaptation of the story, the screenwriter Eric Heisserer remarks, "The biggest challenge was how to make it cinematic. Because Ted's story works so well as a piece of literary fiction, but it didn't need conflict the way the movie does." (Heisserer, 2016) *Story of Your Life* manifests what the human race intellectualized of the inner workings of the universe through its protagonist, however the story lacks an external or inner conflict that forces the protagonist or any other character to make a decision that would further the plot in a cinematic sense. For example, the heptapods that have contacted human race do not *want* anything from them. After their departure Louise says, "We never did learn why the heptapods left, any more than we learned what brought them here, or why they acted the way they did." (Chiang, 1998, p. 38) This lack of motive behind the actions of the heptapods does cause the human race to question the reason of their arrival. However, their curiosity does not end up in any conflict either. Louise and others learn the alien language and their principles of physics, but that's about it. Granted, learning Heptapod B does cause Louise to gain a sense of

knowledge of the future events, but it also brings forth a deterministic mindset that prevents the character from taking any action about what is coming her way. This lack of action and conflict in the short story resulted in *Arrival* taking a different road than *Story of Your Life*.

In order to create tension in the storyline, *Arrival* goes for a major expansion. Despite the fact that Louise's personal journey is what gets the main theme across, the principal plot of the story is the arrival of the aliens and the interactions with them since those kick the story off and form the frame of the storyline. In the short story, heptapods communicate with humans through mirror-like screens called "looking-glasses" acting "as two way communication devices presumably with the ships in orbit" (Chiang, 1998, p. 4) Thus, the spaces inhabited by the species are never the same. Although there is a screen providing their communication, humans are on earth and heptapods are on their ship, presumably. Basically, the whole interaction in the story between the two species is a painfully long skype call, which makes for a flat film narrative. Because of the safe distance of the looking-glasses and the non-threatening manner of the heptapods there is no reason for conflict with the presence of the aliens. Feeling this lack of action and conflict in *Story of Your Life*, Villeneuve and Heisserer made the first alteration with having the aliens come down to earth unannounced in their twelve black, organic-looking spacecrafts, number "twelve" symbolizing the time. The spacecraft design of a black round-edged rock is hovering over the earth, but not touching, as if to symbolize the cautious manner employed by the extraterrestrials. By changing the arrival of the aliens on earth and turning it into a first-contact story, the filmmakers awaken the primal human instinct of fearing the unknown. To quote Eric Heisserer:

The story doesn't really have any conflict of that nature. It doesn't need to. It's a lovely literary conceit in its own right and works without that drama. However, our

early attempts at building this narrative without that conflict added felt very flat, and felt like there were no stakes. There was no ride. The more we played with it, the more Denis and I both realized that if aliens did land on earth and the public didn't get immediate answers as to what their purpose was, the more everybody would freak out. (Heisserer, 2016)

The alteration of their arrival on earth gives the main characters a chance to interact with the aliens face-to-face and causes the humans to react in panic fearing a possible danger or invasion, thus elevating the inherent tension in the story. Although, just like in *Story of Your Life*, the heptapods are harmless calm creatures, their mere presence motivates the largest conflict in the narrative of the film. Faced with a huge black spacecraft landed on twelve different locations on earth, nations of the world are all baffled trying to figure out the danger this extraterrestrial form might cause to them. Unlike that of the story, in *Arrival* the science team alongside some soldiers step into the spacecraft to be able to investigate and communicate; inside the ship there is an utterly different atmosphere than what humans are used to even with a gravitational alteration. A pitch black organic walled corridor leads up to a White luminous glass behind where the heptapods appear out of White mist. Despite them occupying the same space, the film successfully creates a striking difference between the two species while establishing a strong bond. This modification keeps on adding to the action, later on in the film with a soldier attempting to destroy the spacecraft and some countries' reactions causing geopolitical panic. Having the aliens land on earth creates enough tension and conflict to sustain a feature length film, providing an additional theme of communication to *Arrival*. Paralleling the struggle for communicating with the alien race, the humans struggle with each other to let their words come through. The panic caused on earth gives Villeneuve the chance to highlight the importance of communication and understanding each other in

order to overcome obstacles, giving the film an additional theme related to that of language.

In both *Arrival* and *Story of Your Life*, language plays a powerful key role. According to George Bluestone, “If language has become a protagonist in the novel, there is a sense in which time has become its foil. Like the novel and the film, language and time begin in apparent harmony and end in hostility.” (Bluestone, 1957, p. 46) It is difficult to argue with this statement when it comes to this story and the film and their relationship with language. Besides the lack of conflict in the source material, another aspect that is very hard to transmit to film about *Story of Your Life* is its utilization of language. As established, Chiang constructs the language alongside the narrative structure of the film, to reflect the plot and the experience of the characters. Having Louise, the narrator, mixing up tenses while narrating different events and compose the progression in the unusual way she experiences them creates a complex plotline that reveals her perception of time. The direct translation of Chiang’s technique to film would be through voice-over narration which would help present the unique organization of the tenses in *Story of Your Life*. As Robert Stam says:

Film complicates literary narration by practicing two parallel and intersecting forms of narration: the verbal narration, whether through voice-over and/or the speech of characters, and the film’s capacity to show the world and its appearances apart from voice-over and character narration. For André Gaundreault, filmic narration superimposes “monstration” (showing)- the gesture which creates the fictional world- and “narration” (telling) whereby editing and other cinematic procedures inscribe the activity of a filmic narrator who evaluates and comments on the fictional world. Films thus both tell stories (narration) and stage them (monstration). (Stam, 2005, p. 35)

By keeping Louise's narration in the form of a voice-over over the images of past and future memories, the film would have ensured its "fidelity" to the source text, merging both the showing and telling method of André Gaudreault like any other classical narrative would prefer. In fact, depicting a future memory while incorporating future tense with voice-over narration would have been an original idea in cinema. However, that's not what Villeneuve opted for in *Arrival*. Denis Villeneuve is a craftsman who is very much in control of the language of his artwork; from beginning to the end, he oversees every detail and constructs his final product in the pursuit of one vision only. Considering the fact that *Story of Your Life*'s focus is on language, Villeneuve employed devices offered by cinema to construct his own language in *Arrival*. The first step the filmmaker took was to reframe the story.

Maybe not in the same vein Chiang does with his use of language and narrative structure, Villeneuve also gets creative with the arrangement of his tools as well, in a way that is almost like an homage to Lev Kuleshov and his famous "Kuleshov effect." This is the phenomenon by which viewers derive more meaning from the interaction of sequential shots. After an enigmatic shot of an empty patio alongside an haunting score, *Arrival* opens with an heartbreaking two minute montage of Louise loving and losing her daughter. Sequencing shots of this montage is a brief summary of a life, from the baby's birth to her death due to an illness as a teenage girl. Over this montage Louise speaks: "I used to think this was the beginning of your story" (Villeneuve, 2016). The emotional montage ends with Louise walking desperately in an hospital corridor, fading out; "But now I'm not so sure I believe in beginnings and endings." The image opens back with a shot of Louise climbing up the stairs in a building without any expression and the voice-over narrates; "There are days that define your story beyond your life. Like the day they arrived" (Villeneuve, 2016) In a mainstream film following the classical realist film

tradition, a voice-over narration would slowly let the blunt monstration to take the stage and the audience unintentionally would be aware of the fact that what is shown is directly related to the initial narrative voice-over (Stam, 2005, p. 36) From the looks of it, *Arrival* does exactly that by introducing the audience to a woman who had lost a child and was left with a deep sadness in the first five minutes of the film. The heartbreaking montage accompanied by Louise speaking to her daughter over sad music causes the audience to read Louise's expressionless face in the final shot as numbness after the unfortunate loss of a child. But as the editor of the film Joe Walker says, "the beginning is an epilogue masquerading as a prologue" (Walker, 2016).

Villeneuve is well aware that the opening of a film is important to capture the audience's attention, just as an opening line would be in a literary narrative. By now his trademark, Villeneuve employs the first scenes of his films to convey the general tone and theme of the film and captures the audience's attention. Giving away so little and utilizing enigmatic elements such as vague expressions, props or camera movements he invokes the viewer's interest and draws them into his desired perspective. However, it is only when the film ends that Villeneuve lets his audience figure out the essential value of the opening shot or sequence. In *Arrival* using the audience's pre-set assumption that the film's timeline is linear, Villeneuve arranges the shots in an order that would cause the viewer to read Louise's disinterest in the final shot as a depressed state after her daughter's tragic death, meaning the events in the montage happened before the principal events in the film. It is only when the film ends the audience realizes the opening montage was not a flashback but actually a flashforward of what comes later than what is depicted in the film. Therefore, the presumed sadness on Louise's face in the shot right after the montage is merely the audience attaching meaning to her expression. Nothing had happened at that point. And because she does not have the gift of Heptapod B yet, she

has no clue what is about to happen to her. It is all audience making assumptions as a result of the arrangement of the shots. This is simple but brilliant filmmaking.

The alterations and sequencing are some of the topics that matter most when it comes to adaptations. For a story such as *Story of Your Life* whose perception of time is so out of conventional order, the process becomes even more complicated. Conveniently, the research area of narratology seems fit enough to give an explanation. As narratologist Gérard Genette argues the relation between the events depicted and the way and arrangement of their depiction, mainly the three fundamental categories of *order*, *duration* and *frequency*, are important aspects of analysis. (Stam, 2005, p. 32) The *order* of a story is in our case, the nonlinear structure of *Story of Your Life*, meaning the sequencing of the events recounted being from past, present and future without a chronological form. *Duration* can be applied to the difference between the time it takes to read a novel or watch a film, and deals with about how long the event depicted lasts. For instance, the time period from Louise's introduction to the heptapods until their departure lasts over a year, whereas the *future* events with the daughter last twenty-five years. This relation defines the pace of narration. Finally frequency means the times of occurrence of an event and times of its narration like the frequency of the heptapod's appearance in the overall plot. Stam explains Genette's concept:

Genette posits three main variants: 1) singulative narration (a single event is told a single time- the norm in the mainstream fiction film). 2) repetitive narration (an event is recounted many times as in multiperspectical narrations such as Rashomon) 3) Iterative narration (an event which occurred many times is told once) 4) homologous narration (an event which occurred many times and is told many times) Both novel and film offer a possibility not mentioned by Genette which combines 1 and 2, which might be called "cumulative narration", (cases where a

single casual event is gradually fleshed out through repeated flashbacks over the course of the film). (Stam, 2005, p. 32)

If *Story of Your Life* were to be followed exactly at the process of adaptation, the right technique to be employed would be the “cumulative narration” in order to reflect the multi-temporal structure of the story to film. Genette continues to draw attention to how the events are tied together and what their “temporal standpoint” is. Most traditional narratives depict the story either looking back on the events after they have taken place which is called retrospective narration, or before anything has happened which is called oracular or prophetic narration. Of course, the narration could be simultaneous with the events or interpolated and sometimes wrapped within each other. (Stam, 2005, p. 36) It is important how the narrative structure is constructed in the source material and how it is transmitted to the adaptation.

Except for the narration in the opening of the film, which turns out to be an echo of a later Louise, *Arrival* follows Louise as she experiences the events and makes decisions. Removing her narrator status brings Louise a more traditional character arc. Instead of being inside of her head, the audience becomes a bare spectator watching the events unfold. This change of perspective provides Villeneuve with more control over the information revealed to the audience, bringing the audience further into Louise’s perspective, enabling the filmmaker to recreate the time shifts of *Story of Your Life* in a distinct manner. Since the story literally consists of flashbacks and flashforwards, especially because it was narrated by Louise after she had gained the ability to understand Heptapod B, the time structure of the story was another struggle for the filmmakers to demonstrate on screen. As Eric Heisserer comments, “Flashbacks are temperamental little buggers. Hard to know when and how to use them” (Heisserer, 2016). In *Arrival* the viewer is separated from Louise’s thoughts. Therefore, the film’s structure does not allow

a voice-over narration like that of the story. In the film, the flashforwards start manifesting as Louise begins to learn Heptapod B. The first flashforward comes right after her first concrete training of the language and the more she gets a hang of Heptapod B the more frequent the flashforwards become. After she experiences the flashforwards, Louise always seems confused and it is not really clear why for the viewer. Because the audience is introduced to the flashforwards with the opening montage which is in the disguise of a flashback, the natural assumption of the later flashes of Louise with the daughter is that they are snapshots from the past. It is not until when Louise grasps what these visions are that the audience realizes the truth, which is the big twist of the film. Things they thought were past are actually the future. Thus meaning Louise has gained the ability to see the upcoming through Heptapod B.

In a “flashback”, her daughter asks Louise what is the science term for when a competition turns out for the benefit of the both parties involved. The shot cuts back to the present Louise with the alien team and Ian Donnelly, whose name was Gary in *Story of Your Life*, utters “non-zero-sum game”. Returning to the “flashback” Louise answers her daughter’s question repeating the term. This tiny instance is where Louise and, therefore the audience, realizes the “flashbacks” are actually flashforwards. Reframing the story without Louise’s narration and following her throughout her journey rather than having her looking back, results in experiencing the time-shifts as Louise acquires the language and enables Villeneuve to create this twist for the audience. As a trademark of Villeneuve’s, *Arrival* revises the narrative as a mystery. In order to puzzle the viewer, Villeneuve consistently restrains the perspective of his camera. By doing this, he forces the viewer, alongside his characters, to experience the need for information and keeps the story going. It is only when the viewer reaches the end of the film that she can find answers to her questions (and even that is not guaranteed as will be seen in the upcoming

chapter). That is why the opening flashforward montage is put right in the beginning and lacks a future tense like that of the short story. It would simply give away the ending. (Bordwell, 2016) This departure from the source text generates a totally different experience for the reader of the story. Unlike the short story, *Arrival*'s time shifts are less concrete and feel more linear when not, for a very well deserved pay off. Instead of telling right away that Louise has the ability to perceive time differently through voice-over, tenses or camera and editing techniques, Villeneuve holds onto that information and keeps the audience in the dark, building a twist in the storyline. Rearranging the narrative in this order ensures a steady flow and a twist for both Louise and for the audience.

In the tradition of Villeneuve films, *Arrival* comes to a full circle in all senses. It is not surprising to know that Chiang carries out his own writing process in an akin fashion to Villeneuve. Chiang says:

I don't actually start writing the story itself until I know how the story ends.

Typically the first part of the story that I write is the very ending, either the last paragraph of the story or a paragraph near the end. Once I have the destination in mind then I can build the rest of the story around that or build the rest of the story in such a way as to lead up to that. Usually the second thing I write is the opening of the story and then I write the rest of the story in almost random order. I just keep writing scenes until I've connected the beginning and the end. I write the key scenes or what I think of as the landmark scenes first, and then I just fill in backwards and forwards. (Chiang, 2002)

The afore carved out opening and ending is apparent from the design of his story. Not far away from that of *Story of Your Life*'s, the dominance of directionless language results in the film being a circle. Villeneuve makes sure that the theme of the film is

coherent and visible through every aspect of *Arrival*, just like Chiang did in his own work. From tiny details to major plot points, the film follows its own cyclical understanding drawn from Chiang's work, just like with the style and structure of the alien language. In the short story, Heptapod B is described as a graphic design that can be read no matter how it is rotated and described as a radial symmetry just like the heptapod's bodies and movements: "their bodies have no 'forward' direction, so maybe their writing doesn't either." (Chiang, 1998, p. 11) Also their language does not consist of one word at a time, but written all at once, merging all the words into a meaningful sentence. Louise describes, "I had seen a similarly high degree of integration before in calligraphic designs, particularly those employing the Arabic alphabet." (Chiang, 1998, p. 23) In *Arrival*, Villeneuve goes for a design that is the same in theory but looks quite different than an Arabic calligraphy. Drawn from the story's depiction of the alien perception and language having no forward or backward direction, Villeneuve's Heptapod B is designed as a circle, in line with the bigger theme. The aliens write the sentence all at once with an ink ejaculated from their "tentacles" forming a circle sentence. This is a very evident symbol since everything about *Arrival* is just like this writing, cyclical. Even Louise's daughter is given a name following the same concept, Hannah, that is a palindrome meaning that it reads the same from backwards and forwards, whereas in the short story the daughter is nameless. Resembling Ted Chiang's words Eric Heisserer comments, "When I completed the first draft and the bookends of the first three pages and the final three pages, it felt like I was drawing a narrative circle and I just closed the loop. That felt right" (Heisserer, 2016). In that circular sense, the film closes returning to the patio of the opening montage. This time Louise is with Ian as her husband and he suggests her they make a baby. Villeneuve ends his story where Chiang begins; on the night of the

daughter's conception. And "what was a premise of the novella becomes a reveal in the film" (Bordwell, 2016, p. 1).

Arrival is not the same story as *Story of Your Life*. From the way the story is structured to the message conveyed, *Arrival* is using the same elements creating a different mixture. That is the reason why the film's name is not *Story of Your Life*. "I wanted them to be two different stories." (Villeneuve, 2016) When a new artwork is born, whether purposefully based on something else or not, the artists add something of themselves into it. It can be their personal desires and struggles, their worldview, or the cultural, political, sociological environment that the artwork is created in. Ted Chiang wrote Louise in *Story of Your Life* as a character bound to her fate. After gaining the ability to see future events, Louise claims she has lost the capacity of free will and accepts whatever is coming whether it be joy or pain. Her lesson learned from it all is embracing the inevitable. Louise does not have a choice in having a baby, just like she does not have any choice of avoiding that baby's death. Chiang says, "To me, science fiction – it is not about special effects or giant battles between the forces of good and evil. Science fiction is about using speculative scenarios as a lens to examine the human condition" (Chiang, 2016) Because Chiang himself adopts a deterministic view, he constructs his character in the same manner. However, *Arrival* differs.

In Villeneuve's world, the ability to see the future does not mean not being able to alter it. In the short story, Louise's daughter dies from a rock-climbing accident at the age of twenty-five, whereas in the film Hannah dies from an incurable disease when she is just a teenager. Why, though? The first and obvious reason is due to technicality. Having the daughter die at the age of twenty-five would mean aging up the actress playing Louise (Amy Adams) in the scenes with the daughter which would give away the twist. If it was evident from the start that the "flashbacks" were actually flashforwards, there would be

no surprising reveal at the end of the film. The second reason is more to do with the difference of artistic worldview. Rebellious to Chiang's idea of determinism, Villeneuve creates a Louise that has control over her life even after learning the heptapod language. And since she has control over future happenings, having her daughter die from something preventable like rock-climbing would not make sense. Louise would just stop her from rock-climbing. By changing the reason for Hannah's death to an incurable disease, Villeneuve makes Louise's decision to have her more profound. Although she is aware of the pain the loss of her daughter will cause, Louise still chooses to have her for the immense love she will bring. The question that the film asks is like the question Louise asks to Ian, "If you could see your whole life laid out in front of you, would you change things?" (Villeneuve, 2016) Louise chooses the pain that her future will bear so as not to deprive her daughter from her life and herself the love that they will share. Building a character in control of her actions and have the ability to alter her destiny, Villeneuve makes Louise more identifiable as a character and her journey emotionally more impactful on the audience. Even the ending of the film is changed due to this difference in perspective between the artists in charge of the work, when Louise uses her gift to access future events to change the present conflict with the geopolitical crisis.

Adaptation as a concept is the re-creation at the hands of other artists. What separates Villeneuve from many other filmmakers who are interested in adaptations is his ability to develop ideas with cinematic craft and create a higher level of meaning by combining the source material with his originality. Even a task as challenging as adapting a short story to a feature-length stand-alone film Villeneuve accomplishes masterfully, constructing *Arrival* so that every character, every event and every thread are tied together into a circle with time as the mould. No theme introduced is wasted. From the white cinema screen that the heptapods emerge mysteriously from, Villeneuve studies the "species" of

literature, shedding light on both artforms. *Arrival* is a concise and graceful film. The pace is not rushed while Villeneuve uncovers the film's secret. Seemingly tricking the audience to fall into his trap, Villeneuve departs from the road that the short story took to create his vision. Manipulating an already reformed relation of time and space, the director manages to form a similar yet far principles for temporal and spatial relations both in the film and in the relations of the two arts that consist an adaptation while telling an alien story that reflects our reality. After all, in Villeneuve's words: "Making a movie is the art of lying to tell the truth" (Villeneuve, 2016).



4. CHAPTER THREE: Double, Double Toil and Trouble

“Such is our need to shower blame on some distant entity when it is we who lack the courage to face up to what is there before us.” (Saramago, 2002)

A Doppelganger is both alien and familiar. Similar to that feeling associated with the uncanny, a double is there to erode the pace of life creating a sense of wonder and terror at the same time. The seducing idea of a shadow, a reflection, an other who seems identical but stands outside of the “original” makes the self question the validity and uniqueness of its existence. As Martin and Barresi sum up “the soul began as unquestionably real and the self ended as arguably a fiction” (Martin & Barresi, 2006, p. 5). The presence of a double conjures up ambiguity because it can be for or against to the subject, such as a companion in a Platonic sense of the soulmate looking for its other half or an evil twin that is out for vengeance. It is not uncommon for this idea of duality to present itself in literary works, for “the double” can imply any dual or multiple constructions in a text. Doppelganger is frequently encountered in literature for its aptitude as a device for externalising human conflicts of chronic duality and incompleteness forming a direct contrast to the previously accepted idea of unity. Contrasting the humanistic ideals and values of the time of conception, the device allows the author to manifest what is obscure and foreign in a concrete manner. The concept enables the self to duplicate and reproduce herself in various possibilities.

Coming from the German language, the term translates as “double-goer” and emerged in the literary arena thanks to the author Jean Paul Richter who defined doppelganger in a footnote: “So people who see themselves are called” (Richter, 1796). In his study of the motif, Andrew Webber tries to clarify the term as a subjective division between reality and fantasy between the wholesome essential self and constructed illusion

of the self (Webber, 1996, p. 36). The reason for the vague nature of the doppelganger definition is because the concept is broad enough to be used in relation to imagination and desire resulting in distinct interpretations as in identical doubles or resembling ones, objective (external from the self) or subjective (self has more than one identities) doubles. This wide variety of duality explores the “unities of characters, time and space, chronology, three dimensionality and rigid distinctions between animate and inanimate objects, self and other, life and death” (Zivkovic, 2000, p. 122). The core basis for the lack of a definite description for the term is a result of it being a product of culture, meaning that it derives not from a single authority but from myth and folklore. The motif dates back to pagan ideas of twins being enchanted, reflections astonishing and shadows as ghastly and endured as the time went on reshaping the meaning with the current cultural values of the society.

The concept doppelganger can be analyzed from a form or content perspective, each mirroring the other. From religious narratives to modern fiction, the motif of the double occupies a central thematic place exploring the ideals of self and other. “Their central thrust is an attempt to erase the distinction itself, to resist separation and difference, to re-discover a unity of self and other” (Zivkovic, 2000, p. 124). Until the late eighteenth century, the presence of the double in narratives were mostly alienating referring the double as “evil” and removing it from the self turning it into a separate entity. Identifying the other as the evil enemy is not unconventional, for every culture alienates the entity that is radically different from itself that might threaten its existence (Jameson, 1975, p. 136). The perception of duality as the evil other shifted when cultural values and fears had changed and focused more on the individual’s internal self, becoming a manifestation of the subconscious. It is around this time that the double develops into an externalization of some aspects of the self and takes a more “human”

form like in the examples of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1823), Fyodor Dostoyevsky's *The Double* (1846) and Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890). This shift enabled the self to be perceived not as a unified, indivisible whole but scattered and fragmented, manifested visually in an exact replica of the subject. The trope, by creating an uncanny alien that looks way too familiar and by breaking the usual perception of reality, allows the author to make the audience question their own selves. The double motif in modern fiction demonstrates the character as an ideological construction and is an attempt to challenge the accepted western cultural values of capitalism and patriarchy that alienated whatever or whoever is different. In addition to that, the doppelganger is a method to analyze humanistic inner struggles of mental patterns that rattles rationalism, which became a central theme in modern fantasy not only in the written realm of literature but also very much prevalent in the visual art of cinema (Andrade, 2008, p. 43). The terror of those presented with a shadow, a ghost, an alien twin can said to be similar to that of the unease awakened in a literary work with the threat of its adaptation. The main focus of this chapter will be the intricately well-written novel *The Double* (2002) by the Nobel Prize winning Portuguese author José Saramago and its equally confusing cinematic adaptation *Enemy* (2013) by the aforementioned auteur Denis Villeneuve; both works employ this highly seducing trope of the doppelganger.

Fittingly, the motif of a doppelganger is the perfect metaphor for the relationship between a literary work and its cinematic correspondent: "Overtly compatible, secretly hostile" (Bluestone, 1957, p. 2) Taking the novel as the "original" man in this comparison, the film becomes its alien double. Familiar yet strange. Aforementioned, the novel is the norm when it comes to film adaptations of literary works since the narrative of cinema is acknowledged to be born out of the nineteenth century novel tradition. The concept of adaptation became so closely related to novel as a genre that the other genres

are mostly overlooked. As Thomas Leitch puts forward there is a “more general assumption that literary texts are richer, subtler, or more sophisticated than cinematic texts is confined largely to the novel.” (Leitch, 2008, p. 155). Lines between genres in postmodern literary discourse are blurry enough, therefore a discussion of each genre’s transmission to the screen becomes somewhat complicated.

In order to begin an analysis of novel adaptations the first thing to be taken into account is the definition. What is a novel? In the most elementary sense, a novel is a prose fiction of a considerable length (Eagleton, 2004, p.4). However, similar to that of short story, the novel does not have a clear definition either and this, arguably, makes the genre fittest to be adapted to cinema. A strong defendant of the novel, Virginia Woolf describes the genre as the “most pliable of all forms”. Even if this comes from the same critic who claimed cinema as a parasite on literature, it still emphasizes the flexibility of the novel in taking whichever shape it desires (Woolf, 1926, p. 69). The novel manages to ensemble every element that deemed beneficial to itself and blends them together into different mixtures like a melting pot. Since the other literary genres can be considered as more rigid, the novel’s “adaptability” gives it a surpassing quality. This cachet of the novel in the literary discourse causes it to be called “the queen of literary genres” (Eagleton, 2004, p. 1). Clearly, this generic hierarchy of the novel in literature was carried over to the adaptation discourse.

The principal critical approach to novel adaptations is best summed up with a cartoon from *The New Yorker* that Alfred Hitchcock described to François Truffaut in an interview, illustrating two goats eating film cans and one of them going “Personally, I liked the book better.” (Truffaut, 1976, p. 87). Clear from this sarcastic anecdote, the literary source is generally considered as superior. The presumed prestige attached to the literary work has been believed to elevate the inferior art of cinema through adaptations.

This supposed superiority of the novel led to some confusion among filmmakers whose goal was to establish cinema as a respectable artform on its own merit. To support his claim of short stories being a better fit for adaptation than novels, Hitchcock mentions how he would never want to adapt Dostoyevsky's *Crime and Punishment* (1866) since "in Dostoyevsky's novel there are many, many words and all of them have a function", meaning that any changes or additions to the novel would be redundant. Because these filmmakers' approach to cinema is to use the medium to its full potential to create "pure" art, François Truffaut agrees with Hitchcock: "That's right. Theoretically, a masterpiece is something that has already found its perfection of form, its definitive form" (Truffaut, 1976, p. 88). According to them, the novel has reached a level of completeness compared to other literary genres therefore it would be a redundant effort to adapt it to cinema for there is nothing new to add or alter.

Despite its presumed unalterable excellence, novels are still the most adapted out of all genres. The reasons have been mentioned and quite frankly, they should be obvious to anyone by now. Around the time cinema was becoming a narrative device, the novel was savoring its heyday. As the most popular means of storytelling it provided a template for filmmakers who were seeking a way to express themselves through this new medium. Not only were they helpful in constructing the structure of a film, but the novels facilitated the audience becoming a little bit more familiar with this new artform. Seeing popular stories on screen got the audience comfortable with the medium all the while allowing the filmmakers to practice the art with a clear outline. Not to mention the "prestige" of the novel providing elevation for this emerging artform, as Thomas Leitch confirms: "It is as if adaptation studies, by borrowing the cultural cachet of literature, sought to claim its institutional respectability and gravitas even while ensuring adaptation's enduring aesthetic and methodological subordination to literature proper"

(Leitch, 2008, p. 64). The length of the novel became a match for a feature length film as well, since the art of cinema progressed and mainstream films turned into longer pieces. As previously mentioned, a page of a screenplay corresponds to a minute in a film, so an average length novel of ninety pages translates to one and half hour script. Theoretically requiring not many cuts or additions rendering the filmmakers' job "easier". On top of all this, the novels provide cinema a solid income at the box office as well. Since no matter how brilliant a virgin idea could be, there can never be a guarantee for an expecting audience as there would be for a novel adaptation. While any marketing campaign is expensive for a studio, marketing an unheard-of film is even more toilsome to derive profit from. That's why mainstream cinema is filled with adaptations, remakes and sequels because promoting a story which the audience is already familiar with drops the marketing cost drastically while guaranteeing a significant amount of box office success.

Constituting a large amount of the adaptation discourse, novel adaptations are also the target of much criticism mostly with accusations of infidelity, "unquestionably the most frequent and the most tiresome discussion of adaptation" (Andrew, 1984, p. 421-423). Starting with George Bluestone who seemingly accepts the fact that "the moment one abandons the linguistic for the visual medium" there has to become an occurrence of differences, but still believes throughout his *Novels Into Films* (1957) in the superiority of linguistics over visuals, clear from the use of the word "abandon" up above; the field of adaptation had been dominated by the issue of fidelity up until the 2000's. (Bluestone 1957, p. 5) Succeeding critics agreed with Bluestone in categorizing adaptations as "good" or "bad" based on the replication of, or deviation from the source material; a perspective that can said to be derived from the novel's prestige as an older and "respectable" artform (MacFarlane, 1997, p. 8). The same reason applies to adaptations discourse building itself around the cinematic versions of literary canon, generally

belittling the former. Novel's anteriority and general prestige turned the adaptations into blasphemy in the eyes of the critics, especially those films that were adventurous enough to stray away from their source. To quote Virginia Woolf as an example:

So many arts seemed to stand by ready to offer their help. For example, there was literature. All the famous novels of the world, with their well-known characters, and their famous scenes, only asked, it seemed, to be put on the films. What could be easier and simpler? The cinema fell upon its prey with immense rapacity, and to this moment largely subsists upon the body of its unfortunate victim. But the results are disastrous to both. The alliance is unnatural. Eye and brain are torn asunder ruthlessly as they try vainly to work in couples. (Woolf, 1950, p. 168)

Albeit not as harsh as Woolf's opinions, most often critics do favor those adaptations that are tied closer to their source material which brings in the question as to why do filmmakers still insist on branching out since, apparently, all it takes for a successful adaptation is to produce a total knock-off. If filmmakers know they are going to be scrutinized for any deviation from the source material and their version will be passed over as inferior, why do they keep on making them? Better put by Linda Hutcheon: "What motivates adapters, knowing that their efforts will be compared to competing imagined versions in people's heads and inevitably be found wanting?" (Hutcheon, 2006, p. 15). Famously, the director Erich von Stroheim undertook a literal adaptation of the novel *McTeague* (Norris, 1899) resulting in the nine and a half hour long *Greed* (1924) which was later on reduced to two hours of a non-coherent film due to the cuts. Fidelity discourse assumes that the duty of an adaptation is being the cinematic reproduction of something essential about the novel. A McGuffin called "essence" or "spirit" that means a sole true meaning of the novel is expected to be adhered by the filmmaker or else the film fails as an acceptable artwork. There is no definition as to what

part of the novel answers to the essence. Adaptations are about inspiration that an artist derives from the work of another, hence the priority should not be on the source material but on the way the meanings are perceived and reconstructed. “Filmmakers had to be seen as readers with their own rights, and each adaptation – as a result of individual reading processes” (Marciniak, 2007, p. 60). The fidelity approach undermines the filmmakers’ status as artists and belittles their artwork as a poor attempt of imitation, a carryover of the “essence” into a lesser format (Gunning, 2011, p. 31).

Fortunately, the theory of adaptation has come to the realisation that fidelity is now a pleasurable but an irrelevant topic of discussion and embraced the discourse of intertextuality as a reference point of analysis. The emphasis is carried over from the novel to the interart relationship of the texts and the value of influence and expression of artists, giving a more fair shot to the adaptation itself. Afterall, all arts are products of influence. Robert Stam claims that adaptations are “caught up in the ongoing whirl of intertextual transformation, of texts generating other texts in an endless process of recycling, transformation, and transmutation, with no clear point of origin” (Stam, 2000, p. 56).

In spite of being the most accepted of the genres to be adapted, some novels prove themselves “harder” when translating to the silver screen such as the chosen novel of this chapter *The Double* (2002) by Jose Saramago, “the most impressive living novelist” according to Harold Bloom (Rollason, 2002, p. 1). Before dissecting the novel and its adaptation process, it is necessary to briefly familiarize ourselves with the man responsible for the character whose worldview is significant in understanding the work. The author was born as Jose Meirinho Sousa and had gotten his now-renowned name “Jose Saramago” due to being mistakenly registered under his family nickname when he was seven years old. Son of an illiterate mother, Saramago did not even own books until

the age of nineteen, making his writing career a more tremendous accomplishment than it already is. Despite publishing his first novel at the age of twenty-three, the Nobel Prize winning Portuguese novelist returned to his career as a fiction writer after the age of fifty having been a journalist and a passionate activist for communism in between. Following his political career, Saramago continued reflecting his view of the world and humanity in his politically charged and critically honest works. Repeatedly expressing his disapproval of dehumanization as a result of the capitalist ideology, Saramago illustrated competitive globalisation as totalitarianism in disguise and held it responsible for the devaluation of human lives. Set in the same nameless, depersonalized city that resembles today's standardized urban spaces, Saramago's novels focused on the plea of the individual in an oppressive and consumerist environment. His comments on the current state of the world sums up the man responsible for the chosen work of the chapter:

Every day, when we wake up, we may ask ourselves what new horror is awaiting us, not from the world, which, poor thing, is only a patient victim, but from those who resemble us, human beings (...) The human being, the one who resembles me, the one who resembles us, has patented cruelty as a formula for exclusive use on the Planet, and starting out from the perversion of cruelty has organised a philosophy, a thought-system, an ideology, all in all a system of domination and control which has brought the world to the sick condition it now finds itself in. (Rollason, 2006, p. 13; Saramago, 1998)

Although he produced literature in a wide variety of genres from plays to poetry, Saramago's strongest hold had always been novels. He believed "the novel is not so much a literary genre, but a literary space, like a sea that is filled by many rivers" (Saramago, 2006, p. 1). Direct and captivating, Saramago's choice of subject for his novels had always been combining the mundane with the fantastic with philosophical and

psychological undertones, manifesting the toll capitalist life takes on individuals' existence. Apart from the complex subject matters he employed, what makes Saramago's novels distinctive and hard to adapt is how abundant he was with words. Yet the reader can feel the confidence he had in his writing that the abundance never feels meaningless but intentional. Never ending sentences with pages long paragraphs, barely divided by chapters, his novels feel like a gushing river. Once you are in, it is hard to get out. Not even the dialogue is separated from the rest of the prose with dashes. Deliberately disregarding capital letters and quotation marks, Saramago starts sentences with "I" following a comma when an additional speaker is involved in the dialogue, a move that probably makes more sense in its native language, Portuguese. In fact, the only punctuation is either commas that stretch the sentence up to the horizon or a scarcely-used full point to let the reader take a second of breath. This writing technique is to create a prose that is interwoven with the character's stream of consciousness; thus, the flow of the narrative overwhelmingly wraps the reader around to ensure a sense of dread.

Saramago's 2002 published *The Double* follows a similar tradition, incorporating the trope of doppelganger as a device to express human struggle in a nameless, yet familiar to all, metropol environment. Considered as "a warning intended to be read as an urgent call for an effective humanism" by Maria Helena Silva (Rollanson, 2006, p. 12; Silva, 51), *The Double* is the story of a history teacher Tertuliano Maximo Afonso stuck in a "temporary weakness of spirit ordinarily known as depression", living an unimaginable catastrophe that starts after encountering an actor who looks exactly like himself in a film recommended by a colleague. A reason why one is drawn to an adaptation analysis of this novel is how the two medium are interrelated in the universe of the story as well. Maximo comes across his *doppelganger* in a *film* in the *novel* that later on gets turned into a *film*. Meta, right? Although, in his mother's words, "there's a part of

(him) that has been asleep ever since (he) was born” (Saramago, 2002, p. 15), that part shooks and awakens as the knowledge of a doppelganger comes into his life and Maximo becomes obsessed with finding him. Concealing the existence of the double from the people around, mainly his mother and his girlfriend, Maria da Paz, Maximo investigates all the films produced by the company comparing the cast lists, finally narrowing it down to one person: Antonio Claro, who uses the stage name Daniel Santa-Clara. Maximo calls the double in order to get in touch, however, he reaches his wife Helene which initiates the beginning of the disastrous fall. Antonio and especially his wife become infatuated with the idea of the strange double as well, and the two men decide to meet. After disguising himself with a beard, Maximo arrives at the meeting spot to find Antonio armed with a gun. Just as Chekov speculated, a gun appearing in the first act goes off in the third act but with an interesting twist. The meeting goes as estimated, completely bizarre, certifying the exact similarity of the two men down to their scars. The mystique atmosphere brings about the existence of the two in the same space as an impossibility, as if to say “neither can live while the other survives” (Rowling, 2003, p. 841). Afterwards, they discover their only difference which turns out to be that Antonio was actually born thirty-one minutes earlier than Maximo, making him the “original” and Maximo “the double”. This peculiar contrast of their birth time despite on the same day, brings about questions over the timing of their death.

The women of the novel, although they get involved later on as the events escalate, play a pivotal role and are much stronger characters than the double men. However, despite offering a peaceful possibility to the course of the plot, Helene and Maria become pawns in the vengeful game of the doubles. Highly affected by his wife Helene’s infatuation with Maximo’s existence, Antonio decides to get back at him by sleeping with his girlfriend Maria da Paz. Blackmailing Maximo into submission,

Antonio tricks Maria by changing outfits with Maximo and then sleeps with her. In a twisted notion Maximo chooses to take revenge on Antonio by sleeping with *his* wife. When Antonio does not show up the next morning, it is discovered that after Maria had found out about Antonio's lie due to a wedding ring line on his finger, she demanded to be driven back and the two had died in a car crash on their way back. Upset with the news, Maximo comes clear to Helene upon which she seems baffled but later requests him to take the place of his late husband. Maximo agrees. Just when the novel seems to reach an ending, Maximo receives a phone call. It is a man who sounds, and claims to be looking identical to him telling that he has watched a film and discovered Maximo's existence. With a call from a third "double", the events seem to be starting all over again. The novel ends with Maximo making plans to meet this new double. However, this time he is planning to do so with a loaded gun, implying that he has no intention of ending up like Antonio did, asserting his regained originality. But there is one more thing. The fact of Maximo and Antonio being born on the same day but at different times.

The plot is not far from a traditional doppelganger narrative from the two identical people that become nemesis to each other, to an eventual death of one. Even the career choices of the two men are linked to the context of the search for true identity with Maximo being an history teacher, a field enabling the analysis of human identity over time, and Antonio an actor whose job is to take on other identities. (Salazar, 2016, p. 20) What sets *The Double* apart is the way it contrasts the qualities attributed to the trope and twist them paradoxically, indulging in the tradition historically, narratively and theoretically in a postmodern sense (Marciniak, 2007, p. 65). However Saramago's distinctive writing style combined with the intricate and heavy plot of the novel causes the novel to become a tough read. Through its characters, the novel ignores any grounding element, making it hard to come to a single reading. Although the subject

matter is rich and captivating, the enigmatic structure and Saramago's heavy narrative style contributes to the overall dread and paranoia. One either finishes this book in one weekend, or probably never. Of course, this sensation is far from a flaw. As a criticism of hectic and lonely urban life shackled to consumerism, Saramago intentionally constructs his novel to feel like an improvised tale that turns into a nightmare, not only for his tight casted characters but for the readers as well. Quoting from his interview with *Political Affairs*, "I prefer perplexity, doubt, uncertainty . . . because that is the way we humans really are. A human being is a being who is constantly 'under construction,' but also, in a parallel fashion, always in a state of constant destruction." (Neralich, 2012, p. 1) The inner logic of the novel is consistent throughout. Borrowing not only from his earlier works, Saramago takes inspiration from history, psychology, philosophy and politics to create a multidimensional and intertextual novel.

Originality is a concept that is prevalent throughout the narrative by both of the doubles questioning their legitimacy. Although Antonio's thirty-one minute earlier birth seem to grant him the title of the original, the tables turn when the interpretation of their characters change as Antonio decides to go after Maria da Paz as a revenge on Maximo and alters into the offensive one of the two, therefore, traditionally speaking, becoming the double. This reversal of roles manifests physically when the two exchange clothes as well as their identities by sleeping with each other's partner. Since Maximo agrees on taking the part of Helene's husband after Antonio dies in the car crash with Maria da Paz, it becomes Maximo who's died and Antonio is the one living. Utilizing the concept of fluid identity via the motif of the doppelganger, Saramago demolishes the possibility of a truly totalitarian agenda. By switching their positions, Saramago creates both a traditional and an authentic double narrative "in which the 'original' murders his double (or vice versa) and then realizes that by doing that he has at the same time committed suicide – the

double being an immanent part of himself.” (Marcus, 2013) Maximo gets “transformed into Antonio Claro for the rest of his life” and therefore reclaims his position as both the double and the original. As it was in the beginning of the novel, “Tertuliano Maximo Afonso may have changed his name, but he continues to be the same person whom we accompanied to the video shop” (Saramago, 2002 p. 307). Just as the reader gets comfortable with this ending to the story, Saramago takes a sudden turn solidifying his message of identity being “constructed through infinite repetition” when the phone rings and the existence of another double is revealed. (Salazar, 2016, p. 37) Before leaving to meet this emerging duplicate Maximo leaves a note without any signature that reads, “I shall return” as if to solidify his existence by claiming his return.

Saramago utilizes conventional narrative devices and twists them on their head, featuring a blend of voices in consistent with this unstable identity narrative. Seemingly employing Maximo as the focal point up until the middle, the perspective constantly shifts as the events progress. After the two men meet, the narrators keeps switching between the two, but always referring to themselves as “we”, an interesting choice of word considering the doppelganger aspect. This constant change in the narration, along with the unconventional language of the author, renders the narrator unidentifiable at times. These contrasting voices provide different perspectives in a unified authorial knowledge. In addition to these back and forth shifts, the reader is also left with inner dialogues with the characters’ conscious, “common sense”, as one of the characters, who utters “that nothing is simple, it just seems simple sometimes” a line summing up the postmodern theme of the novel (Saramago, 2002, p. 120). Thanks to the existence of common sense as the narrator who is both an insider and an outsider, the author safely draws a line between reality of the reader and the fantasy of the novel. When Maximo tries to justify seeking his double, he says that “he’ll never be a stranger” to which

common sense replies “We’re all strangers, even us.” (Saramago, 2002, p. 24) Despite being an extension of Maximo’s consciousness, common sense is a device for Saramago to present the impossibility of knowing anyone, even ourselves, to the fullest capacity. These self-aware asides and self-correction dialogues with the common sense are a constant throughout, sometimes creating a sarcastically meta breakaways from the heavy atmosphere such as:

There are moments in a narrative, and this, as you will see, has been one of them, when any parallel manifestation of ideas and feelings on the part of the narrator with respect to what the characters themselves might be feeling or thinking at that point should be expressly forbidden by the laws of good writing. (Saramago, 2002, p. 24)

Seemingly all over the place, the novel is actually so self-conscious that common sense complains to Maximo about their relationship: “You and me, your common sense and you, we hardly ever meet to talk, only very occasionally, and, to be perfectly honest, it’s hardly ever been worthwhile.” (Saramago, 2002, p 130). Because the narrator is ever changing and the narrative is told in a constant flow without stops, the personification of common sense does not feel out of place especially since the events escalate. Of course, the creation of such a character is caused by the need to externalize the author’s existence inside the character, giving them a multilayered mind. The existence of the author is necessary in order to emphasize the lack of communicative abilities that the characters have. Drawing closer to the ending, Saramago defends the power of language in solving human mistakes and points out to the difficulty in applying common sense; thus, he claims in reference to the catastrophe of the novel that “with a little common sense, the matter could have ended there.” (Saramago, 2002, p. 228). Like the other characters of *The Double*, common sense is a vessel for the author to express the hardship of

communication and explore human nature, as all human beings seem to struggle with words. As Maximo contemplates after a discussion with his mother

Words can be the very devil, there we are thinking we allow out of our mouths only the words that suit us, and suddenly another word slips out, where it came from we don't know, we didn't ask for it to appear, and because of that word, which we often have difficulty remembering afterward, the whole conversation abruptly changes direction, and we find ourselves affirming what we denied before, or vice versa, what happened just now was a perfect example, I hadn't intended speaking to my mother so soon about this whole mad story. (Saramago, 2002, p. 190)

In addition to the language and characters employed, Saramago, conventionally, utilizes the motif of mirrors in the quest for a stable identity. Recalling Lacan's mirror-stage, since the development of the ego builds on the other image on the mirror being perceived as the self, emergence of a doppelganger shatters that identification on the mirror. After his initial encounter with an exact look-alike in a film, Maximo finds himself staring at a mirror drawing a mustache and,

“at that moment, Tertuliano Maximo Afonso became the actor about whose name and life we know nothing, the teacher of history in a secondary school is no longer here, the apartment is not his, the face in the mirror has another owner.” (Saramago, 2002, p. 25)

By misrecognizing his own image, Maximo gets defamiliarized to his own identity through his copied appearance. A similar mirror confrontation takes place when Maximo decides to put on a beard as a disguise for his investigation of his double's neighbourhood and is baffled “by his having a whole new sense of himself as if, finally, he had come face-to face with his own authentic identity. It was as if, by looking different, he had become more himself.” (Saramago, 2002, p. 147). Alienated to his own

appearance so much that Maximo starts identifying with an unfamiliar image as his own since it gives a sense of uniqueness. Anxious as a result of his fleeting identity, he desperately searches for a unique and whole inner self that reflects externally. With the same impulse, Maximo decides to burn portrait photographs of himself that he had got taken in a vain attempt to preserve his fading identity “so as not to have himself multiplied” (Saramago, 2002, p. 164). As Salazar points out, Maximo’s behaviour brings Linda Hutcheon’s assertion that “photos are still presences of absences” (Hutcheon, 1989, p. 88) In contrast to what Maximo initially thinks, the photograph, as a duplicant of the original, damages singularity and “becomes a reminder of the absence that occupies the place of self” (Salazar, 2002, p. 26).

The choice of doppelganger as the central conflict enables the author to raise questions regarding individual identity, subjectivity and representation in a suffocating capitalist environment. Intertwined with the language and the dialogue, the doppelganger narrative does not only express identity disruption, but reflects the humanistic sense of self. The constantly changing and fluid characters of *The Double* mirror the theme of reality and totalization. Although he suffers from depression, the doppelganger is not a delusion that Maximo’s mind perceives or an inner self that is projected outward but an actual existing identical human with a family, unlike that of other modern doppelganger narratives such as Dostoyevsky’s *The Double* (1846). Antonio is not a device for Maximo’s subconscious to speak but a person who is more confident in his own actions. Nevertheless, the existence of a double does provide a fantastical tone therefore the shifting and deceptive identities illuminate the novel’s criticism of totalization. As Linda Hutcheon writes:

Postmodern representational practices that refuse to stay neatly within accepted conventions and traditions and that deploy hybrid forms and seemingly mutually

contradictory strategies frustrate critical attempts (including this one) to systematize them, to order them with an eye to control and mastery—that is, to totalize. (Hutcheon, 1989, p. 37).

Saramago successfully employs and subverts the Doppelgänger trope. While in the beginning the lines and the relationship between the two men is quite typical as the double existing only as a contrast to the original, things change as the plot moves forward. Traditionally the doppelgänger functions in vicious ways against the original. However, *The Double* keeps complicating who the original or the double is. Despite the first half of the novel focusing on Maximo as the protagonist and the trope of the doppelgänger granting him the original, his life and aggressive mannerisms toward Antonio recall that of the doppelgänger. Even Antonio comments on Maximo's intrusive behaviour saying that "cinema doubles come when they are called, and this one has invaded our house" (Saramago, 2002, p. 182). The narrator points out the blurry line between the double and the original as well:

just in case you think that, because we have known him longer, we harbor some special preference for Tertuliano Maximo Afonso, we would point out that, mathematically speaking, as many inexorable probabilities of his having been the second-bom hang over his head as over Antonio Claro's. (Saramago, 2002, p. 173)

The Double's motif of doppelgänger is incredibly appropriate in discussing the novel's adaptation process for a similar concept of "original" and "copy" is be encountered in the discourse. In a manner of Derridean deconstruction, the hierarchy between the works is subverted where the original does not contradict the copy. On the contrary, presence of a copy elevates the status of the so-called original. Even the concept of originality is questionable for pure originality is impossible in an intertextual world of

arts. As Russel Banks notes both activities of writing and reading a novel can be seen “as an intimate exchange between strangers, a secret sharing.” (Stam, 2005, p. 14) Therefore a novel is read by each individual through his/her own inner desires and imagination and when projected onto the silver screen the product becomes the interpretation of not one single individual, but all the collaborative artists’. Although some critics try to compare the two works in relation to a fidelity to the “spirit” of the source material or an attempt to find an equivalent in the new medium, where “in fact, there can be no real equivalence between source novel and adaptation.” (Stam, 2005, p. 18)

Despite the complex characters and the gripping plot, the narrative style and the heavy subject matter undermines the novel’s adaptation qualities. As discussed earlier, studios tend to opt for stories that can easily be spoon-fed to the audiences, rather than thought-provoking intellectual ones. Saramago centers his worldview and criticism of the individual life in a capitalist environment raising philosophical questions attributed to self and identity. This by itself seems like a complete declaration on a complex issue. Having a new artist with unique perspectives adding to the weight of *The Double* makes up for a film that would require intellectual effort, thus not many mainstream viewers who deem cinema as only an entertainment to erase their daily problems with, would choose to enjoy it. However, it is a redundant endeavour to adapt a film if nothing new or different is added to the source for “Old wine in new bottles is not necessarily a bad thing, but something in the pouring out must be, for the reader, a sparkling revelation.” (Manguel, 2004, p. 1) Out in 2013, *Enemy* is Villeneuve’s second adaptation feature and a unique and intense adventure in its own right. Carrying over the plotline and theme of the novel, Villeneuve’s lens enlarges what Saramago put forward and blends it with his authentic vision. An earlier adaptation of another Saramago novel, *Blindness* (2008) directed by Fernando Meirelles, centering a sudden blindness that overtakes the population of an

unnamed city, was deemed “um grande filme” by Saramago himself, in tears after a special screening for the author. Saramago was especially reluctant to give away the rights to any of his works until he experienced the adaptation of this particular novel for the complex visual structure of the work’s concentration on blindness. Therefore a positive response as such above opened the gateway to further adaptations of his works. Although the film was criticized for infidelity, Saramago celebrated the alterations saying that a filmmaker is not a mere copycat (Cultura, 2008). This gratulation quote from the author is significant in specifying his views on adaptation as a concept, defending the thematic and stylistic departures from the novel in creating original art.

Approval of *Blindness* as a concrete work of art has led Saramago into trusting the producer Niv Fichman who requested the rights of *The Double* right after the special screening, Denis Villeneuve’s involvement in the project came later for Fichman wanted a director with a vision who would do justice to the novel. Villeneuve reports the developments as:

As soon as I read the book I knew I wanted to make a feature film from this wonderful piece of literature. The idea of exploring the identity and subconscious of a person in a relationship with his intimacy is a subject that deeply interests me. I also loved the notion of working with very few actors and having a lot of time with them to play with the mise-en-scène. (Seville, 2013)

Just like the strong connection that the producer and the director had, Javier Gullon, the screenwriter of *Enemy* also developed a firm relationship with Villeneuve, claiming to have felt almost “the double of each other” and the two worked on the script together trying to achieve a specific tone. Fascinated with the novel, Denis Villeneuve found correlations in the story to his earlier films in the cases of “the ghosts of the past

and the fact that repetition is hell.” (Weston, 2014) Despite making a clear distinction between a novel and a screenplay, Gullon seems to have been taken with the fabricated idea of the “essence” of a source material. He says:

To me a screenplay and a novel are completely different pieces of work but we tried hard to keep the soul of the book. When you read a Saramago sentence, you can feel that he deals with words as a master. He knows what to do with words, so it's very inspiring. On the other hand when you read the book, there are some moments that are not very cinematic. Because we are making a movie, I had to look for the image, for the visual impact. I had to look for the cinema. (Seville, 2013)

Although the screenwriter credit goes to Javier Gullon, *Enemy* is more of a film that was written on the set. Alongside Gullon, Denis Villeneuve worked very closely with the lead actor Jake Gyllenhaal in creating a solid duality in the characters and a compelling cinematic narrative. The strong connection built between the actor and the director definitely reflected in the final product that is the film. As Gyllenhaal agrees, “That was, to me, the most interesting but hardest part of it. Discovering this narrative as we went along,” and he continues, “When I met with Denis and talked about the film, his idea of what it was, and what do you want it to be, far surpassed what the script was saying. I think the script offer a very interesting blueprint for what he wanted to do” (Gyllenhaal, 2014). The fact that the the writing process of *Enemy* continued on the set, up until the editing room can be read as a proving point for Villeneuve’s total authorship. Unfortunately, *Enemy* could not get approval from the author like *Blindness* did. Saramago was not able to see the finished adapted version of his novel for he passed away just when the production began.

Although based on the novel, the filmmaker works his magic again in creating a unique experience out of an already established story. As a trademark of Villeneuve's, *Enemy* opens with a quick montage of three shots. An eerie music over an enigmatic shot of a city from a distance accompanied with the sound of a voicemail from a mother to her son saying she is concerned about his new apartment's situation; cutting to a man sitting alone in his car, presumably listening to the voicemail; cut to a naked pregnant woman sitting on a bed. The montage is followed by a caption reading: "Chaos is order yet undeciphered", a direct quote from the novel. Things take a sudden bizarre turn when the caption fades into a sequence of an underground sex club where women masturbate and men hungrily watch. The same man in the car is among the audience watching a woman about to squash a tarantula-like spider with her high heels. So far, none of this haunting and provocative psychosexual scenes scream Jose Saramago's *The Double*.

The brilliance of Villeneuve is that he gives his films all he has without taking anything for granted. Although the novel has a clear outline that could have easily been applied to a feature film with a definite beginning, middle and an end, Villeneuve likes to spin things on their head and make his films really *his*. He says, "I think the best way to respect an author is to be very honest about the way you adapt it. Totally destroy the original and make it your own." (Villeneuve, 2014) Fascinated with the cyclical structure of *The Double*, Villeneuve created a whole new narrative surrounding similar ideas with creative elements resulting in a shocking finale. He explains, "In the book, it's a different way to express the idea of cycles; the idea of repetition. But it's a different way to express it, but there is a similar ending, but not with the same images." (Villeneuve, 2014) The outline of *Enemy*'s plot can be said to be quite similar to that of *The Double*. Adam, who is Maximo in the novel, is a university lecturer stuck in a routine of tedious activities he partakes either by himself or with his girlfriend Mary (Maria da Paz). After discovering

he has a double in a film recommended by a colleague, Adam tracks down the geminal man, Anthony, an actor living with his pregnant wife Helen, and initiates the destructive struggle. Following Saramago's footsteps, at the end of *Enemy* only one of the double survives. However, despite the apparent similarity of the plotline, the execution makes all the difference rendering the film a somewhat "loose" adaptation. As his trademark, the filmmaker seems infatuated with complex sequences that needs serious deciphering and turns the source on its head producing a narrative style that is far from the accustomed film narrative. Villeneuve has saturated the film with a dripping sense of danger and dread haunting each frame, sum of all which results in a gripping psychosexual thriller. Unlike that of the novel, *Enemy* is compact yet immensely puzzling, leaving the audience perplexed and frozen for meaning when the credits role. It takes several watches until one begins to grasp the actual story and the message behind it.

Villeneuve has given a simple explanation for the film, "*Enemy* is a one way trip to the subconscious of a man struggling with issues regarding intimacy." (Villeneuve, 2013) The film is a case study of a troubled character with untied strings and the fragmented narrative is to force each viewer to put them together in a unique mixture. Alongside themes carried from the novel such as the toll of urban life and isolation, the filmmaker adds themes of his own of control and fear of commitment. Carefully planned, *Enemy* is an exploration of a man feeling trapped with symbols and ciphers hidden throughout. Every little detail plays a big part and nothing is arbitrary. Villeneuve is consistent and in control from start to finish. To achieve a sense of dread suited to the story, Villeneuve arranged diverse tools provided by the medium of cinema. While Saramago creates tension and exasperation through his continuous writing manner and tempo in his novel, building a sense of dread is harder to achieve in cinema for the feeling

is more abstract than, say, fear or suspense. Dread is an intangible anxious ambience a film instills on its audience by drawing them into its world.

Although sequences of dread are not uncommon, a constant dread that successfully haunts the entirety of a film can only be achieved by masters like David Lynch in his *Mulholland Drive* (2001), Stanley Kubrick in *The Shining* (1980) and Roman Polanski in *Repulsion* (1965). The filmmaker admits the influence of the said auteurs that can clearly be seen from the film itself. Villeneuve comments, “It’s true that this project, in the beginning, was influenced by Hitchcock and a little by Polanski. When you make a movie in the 21st century, you are always being influenced by tons of masters.” (Villeneuve, 2014) Following their footsteps, Villeneuve skillfully constructs an uncomfortable feeling that crawls under one’s skin and keeps the audience on edge even when nothing unsettling is happening on the screen. All the elements of the film are chosen intentionally as Villeneuve comments, “We did a lot of visual brainstorming. So we used specific filters specific lenses, specific camera movement, specific way to light the movie.” (Baville, 2015) The unconventionally off-centered framing and camera movements invoke an subconscious uneasiness in the viewer, who is not accustomed to seeing such frames in mainstream filmmaking as shots of characters with wide void spaces above his heads hinting to the mystery surrounding their minds. In addition to the intentionally off framing, the color scheme chosen for *Enemy* is there to endorse the already established sick mind of the character. The film is washed in a morbid yellow that connotes the subject matter of the film with sensations of jealousy, deceit, sickness and menace, while creating a nightmarish atmosphere that steers the audience to question the reality of the situation. Villeneuve asserts that getting the yellow look of claustrophobia and paranoia in the film came directly from the source material which, in his mind, is set in the 1980’s South America. Villeneuve interestingly claims that the Reagan era’s color

to him, is a totalitarian yellow. He says, “The idea was to shoot the city as it is but bring in the atmosphere of the book, the pressure that was inside the book.” (Villeneuve, 2014)

The production Designer of *Enemy*, Patrice Vermette explains Villeneuve’s inspiration for the film as photographs of sandstorms, commenting that “It is the color of that dirty smug. It is like a smug that takes away life, like oppression. The city that takes away your own self.” (Baville, 2015) The dread achieved with the monochromatic look is supported with the eerie architecture and skyline of Toronto. As was strongly stressed by Saramago in *The Double*, the hardships brought by urban capitalist life are reflected in *Enemy* as well. Villeneuve portrays the brutalist concrete structure of Toronto to mirror the alienated state the protagonists are in while inhabiting the space. The utilization of music and the general sound design of the film is in an echoing manner to that of *Arrival*, sparsely used, presenting the characters as preys trapped in the web of the city. The space of Toronto is another strong figure in the overall story of the film. As Vermette remarks:

We had many discussions about should it be a dream world, should it be reality.

And we thought about brutalist, the movement that takes away any sensibility. One of the sub themes of the film, is the search for personality. The closeness of living together. So you lose your identity. (Baville, 2015)

The addition to the source material that stands out the most is the recurrent images of spiders that are scattered throughout the film. Spiders are the most enigmatic motif in the film and are actually not present in the source material at all. Villeneuve claims regarding the symbol, “I am not sure if Saramago would have been happy with the idea of having something so surreal in the naturalistic environment that he created in the novel. But it is an image that I find hypnotic and profound.” (Baville, 2015) First introduced right in the beginning montage, *Enemy* is filled with inexplicable images of spiders

hovering the city or taking anthropomorphic shapes. For they are additions in the adaptation only and the reason for their presence is never explained in the film, there have been interesting interpretations as to the meaning behind the symbol of spiders.

Villeneuve intentionally builds the symbol as mysterious to leave room for personal readings and even made the cast sign a confidentiality agreement to forbid them from clarifying the meaning of spiders to the media. The puzzling question of the recurrent motif of spiders will be addressed at the end of the analysis.

Villeneuve summarizes the film simply as this: “It is the story of a man leaving his mistress to go back to his wife. And it’s the most simple story on earth, but told in a very complicated way. Because it’s seen from his subconscious point of view.” (Villeneuve, 2014) Filled with cryptic symbols and dialogue, *Enemy* requires a thorough step-by-step analysis to be understood completely and since there has never been a definite clarification by the filmmaker himself, the analysis cannot go further than personal interpretation. However the filmmaker does explain that the goal of the film is to make the viewer question if the events happening are in reality or in the subconscious of one character. According to the perspective of this thesis, in Villeneuve’s story, there are no “doubles”. Because, unlike the novel, Adam does not exist. The filmmaker goes on to explain in an interview:

I think the thing that you are talking about the main tension of the film, which is are we witnessing an extraordinary event of someone seeing another [of] himself, or is it a man starting to go berserk, and having a double identity? Are they two, or just one? And the movie becomes constructed on that tension, like the book. Is he spying on another [of] himself, or is he spying [on] himself? It’s like my version of the equation $1+1=1$. (Villeneuve, 2014)

All about repeating patterns and terror of control, Villeneuve fashions another narrative with a cyclical structure as Anthony becomes his own *enemy* in the form of a doppelganger, “Adam”, who is actually a delusion caused from Anthony’s psychosis. Already having commitment issues in his marriage, the looming arrival of a baby forces Anthony to adjust his life accordingly which amplifies Anthony’s fear of being tied down. Desiring an independent life, the pressures drive Anthony into delusion to create the persona of “Adam” from his deep subconscious, totally separate from his real self, to help himself get through the troubles of real life responsibilities. In short, “they are two souls that have the same body, but they don’t need it in the same ways.” (Villeneuve, 2014)

The doppelganger as a trope not only allows the artist to express the fluid nature of human identity, it also reveals the repetitive quality of subjectivity. “The trope of the double reveals the Doppelganger on which our identities are founded.” (Rollason, 2006, p. 29) Just like an antithesis to Gabriel Miller’s assertion stating that “the novels’ characters undergo a simplification process when transferred to the screen, for film is not very successful in dealing either with complex psychological states or with dream or memory, nor can it render though,” Villeneuve takes higher risks and deepens the characters by creating a multilayered psychological thriller. (Miller, 1980, p. 13)

Because *Enemy* presents itself through the eyes of the imaginary double, Adam, and lets the audience experience the events from his fictional perspective, the plot gets complicated and harder to decipher as the two men interact on screen. The interaction, in fact happens inside Anthony’s mind, who is not even introduced until halfway through the film. To clarify the complex storyline briefly, Anthony is an aspiring actor who has been going through commitment issues with his wife Helen. When she gets pregnant, he is obliged to quit his dream of acting and gets a job as a history teacher at a university. The mundaneness of his undesired everyday life stirs his anxiety up, triggering severe

psychosis resulting in his imaginary double life as both Anthony and Adam, the former an attractive actor, and the latter a plain history teacher. The scenes with Adam alone in his apartment or with Mary are actually all taking place inside Anthony's mind, contrary to how they are presented on the screen. The relationship with Mary is nothing but a fantasy either, although Mary is a real person that Anthony desires and occasionally stalks. Clearly, Villeneuve takes Saramago's *The Double* and constructs a whole new narrative with many layers in the adaptation. An interesting point is that the name "Adam" is the name of the first man created according to the Book of Genesis, from whose rib Eve was built. Anthony and Adam both have a scar on their rib cages.

Very similar to *The Double* following Maximo's perspective in the first half, *Enemy* sets up the story through Adam the history teacher and for the first ten minutes of the narrative the audience is introduced to his dull lifestyle filled with lecturing and zestless sex with his distant mannered girlfriend Mary in his empty-looking apartment. The scenes where Adam is lecturing carries importance for the film since they reveal the theme and the structure of the film as Adam explains to class:

It's all about **control**. Every dictatorship has one obsession, and that's it. So, in ancient Rome, they gave the people bread and circuses. They kept the populace busy with entertainment. But other dictatorships use other... other strategies to control ideas, the knowledge. How do they do that? They lower education, they limit culture, censor information. They censor any means of individual expression. And it's important to remember this, that this is a ***pattern that repeats itself*** throughout history. (Fichman & Villeneuve, 2013)

In the early stages of the film, the given lecture seems a commentary about the general state of the country or maybe the character's own struggles with authority.

However, in the general context of the film, it is a direct declaration of Anthony's fears and *Enemy*'s theme. It is important to note the emphasis on the "pattern that repeats itself", for that is what Anthony's journey ends up becoming. The delusion of Anthony seems to manifest externally when he, as Adam, encounters himself in a film he acted in as an extra. The realization of the existence of an exact lookalike is the starting point of Anthony demolishing his own delusion which must have been going on inside of his head since his wife's pregnancy news, that is presumably the essential cause of his split: i.e, the anxiety over total submission of his life. The concept of doppelganger was discussed by Sigmund Freud among his analysis of the stranger being eerie as opposed to familiarity. According to Freud, the double starts out as a protection by the ego against extermination, yet turns into "strange announcer of death." (Freud, 1919, p. 5) Further, Lacan mentions the mirror stage as the apparition of the double in our lives as the ego recognizes itself separate from the body. To be able to differentiate oneself, perception of another's external presence is needed.

Enemy is of a man's psychological struggle who cannot seem to break the pattern that he is a prisoner of. The quotation on the previous page is important for summing up the theme, because similar to that of the novel, the narrative is presented as quite cyclic as well. People who suffer from certain addiction or with a troubled history of past trauma might experience falling back into repetition of a bad habit. According to Freud, trauma disturbs the person's facility to deal with upcoming challenges; thus, the victim who could not overcome the rearguards might "repeat the repressed material as a contemporary experience instead of...remembering it as something belonging to the past." (Freud, 1920) Also, people who struggle with addictions can fall into the clutches of going back to destructive habits. Petta explains in his "Psychopathology of Addiction", once a drug addict is reunited with the pleasure of his addiction, the perception of time is

generally lost and the addict is trapped in a compulsive repetition. (Petta, 2014, p. 476) Presumably following the emergence of his infidelity with his marriage and upcoming fatherhood, Anthony had a psychosis leading up to him having dissociative identity disorder, where his mind had split into Adam to reflect on his “shameful” double life. Because Villeneuve has not set up the narrative as easily puzzled out, *Enemy* is filled with cryptic cues for the audience to catch and link together. After watching the film and finding out about the double, Adam lectures about repetition:

It was Hegel who said that all the great... greatest world events happen **twice**, and then Karl Marx added: **the first time it was a tragedy; the second time it was a farce**. It's, uh, strange to think, uh... Yeah, a lot of the world's thinkers are worried that... that this century will be a... a **repetition** of the last one. Now, there's... there's an interesting observation. A creative act of memory, to remember something, **to remember somebody**, is, uh... It's always coloured by **emotions**... (Fichman & Villeneuve, 2013)

As Freud remarks in *The Uncanny*, “The ‘double’ was originally an insurance against the destruction of the ego,” as a way for the individual to reflect on their inner struggles in an outer manner. (Freud, 1919, p. 5) Through a double, the most secret troubles are shed light on. Although Villeneuve was very careful in designing the men exactly identical in their appearance and not giving them any traits that would let the audience visually differentiate them down to their scars and beards, the two men are actually easily distinguishable from their distinct mannerisms thanks to the nuanced acting of Jake Gyllenhaal. While Adam is sloppy, disorganised and insecure, Anthony is portrayed healthy, confident and attractive. These differences in the mannerisms are due to reflect the ideology contrast between the characters. The passivity of Adam and aggressiveness of Anthony are presented as a dichotomy in the real character’s fear of

control and commitment. Anthony, who is the actual person, is aggressive because he feels chained down due to his marriage and wife's pregnancy and the passive Adam is the side of the married future-father who carries over the melancholic burden of marriage and guilt of infidelity. The apparent contrast in their demeanor is to highlight the drastic split happening in the mind of the man due to the fear of commitment. Anthony pairs commitment with control on his life especially by another woman. In addition to highlighting the distinction between the two men, the general mannerisms of the characters cue the dividedness of the same psyche. The fear of total control by women drives the lecherous character to psychosis, hence shaping one of the themes of the film. Similar to what is illustrated in the novel, Adam and Anthony are battling for supremacy, forcing the audience to speculate over the reality of the situation. Villeneuve, as always, does not spoon feed his audience to be able to solve the puzzle with the ending, rather leaves question marks all over the place to push intellectual thinking long after the film has ended, even requiring several watches.

Though the argument that Adam and Anthony are the reflections of the same psyche might seem as a personal interpretation more than an actuality (since it is never overtly revealed as such in the film), Villeneuve leaves out solid leads throughout. The unity of the two men is subtly hinted at through little moments for the audience to catch on and tie together starting with the photograph. After discovering his name from the film's cast list, Adam checks Anthony's online profile on the talent agency's website. To compare the physical similarities they share, Adam holds up a torn photograph of himself with someone's arms around his neck, next to Anthony's headshot. The photograph seems to be in a post-break up state since the person hugging is a woman and is torn off. Later on in the film when Adam visits Anthony's apartment, he finds the exact same photograph on the shelf, except this one is not torn and the cuddling arms belong to

Helen, Anthony's wife. It is not coincidental that the photograph in the possession of Adam, who is a free single man with a casual girlfriend, is torn; because when he is Adam, the wife is out of the picture. Although his life seems significantly more mundane and depressive, presumably due to a subconscious guilt of having cheated and left his pregnant wife, Adam is not under anybody's control and seems totally "free". Even his relationship with the girlfriend is portrayed casual, not involving any emotional depth. Anthony, on the other hand, is trapped inside a growing family with a distrustful wife. He is longing for anyone but Helen who is always on edge due to Anthony's mischievous past, apparent from her question after a mysterious phonecall from Adam to Anthony: "Are you seeing her again?" (Villeneuve, 2013). The photograph is there on the shelf as a proof, with Helen's hands literally around Anthony's neck.

Upon the mysterious call, Helen shows up at Adam's university unannounced, marking a pivotal scene in *Enemy* that establishes Helen's significance as a character in the film. She seems utterly perplexed and upset at the sight of Adam. At this point, her reaction is read as a shock caused by the encounter of an exact replica of her husband, however she seems oddly sad rather than amazed. The two start conversing and it quickly becomes apparent that Adam has no idea who Helen is, asking her how far along her pregnancy is. Right after their conversation Helen calls Anthony in an attempt to prove his separate identity. Villeneuve keeps the shot in long that includes both her on the phone and Adam who is walking towards the building in order to blur the line of separation. Anthony does not pick up until Adam walks and disappears from the shot, leaving an open door for a shared identity. Helen becomes visibly upset after the interaction and confronts Anthony about it when she gets back home, asking him what is going on. Anthony acts clueless and claims not knowing what she is talking about, to which Helen responds with tears in her eyes: "I think you know." (Villeneuve, 2013)

Supposing Adam and Anthony are two separate strangers, how could Helen know where Adam, the guy who called her husband mysteriously, worked? And why does she become so upset upon meeting him? Why would Anthony be responsible? Helen is one of the most important clues in solving the puzzle of *Enemy*. She realizes Anthony's psychosis almost immediately, hence her agitated reactions, perhaps because this is not the first time that this is happening. As the presumed cause of Anthony's psychological manifestation, Helen is seen helpless until the final scene trying to grasp the magnitude of the psychosis and a way out for her troubled husband.

Another important female figure seems to be Anthony's mother, who has the least amount of scenes however the largest impact over him. Even the opening montage is haunted by the overbearing voice of the mother, claiming she is worried about the state of his apartment over enigmatic shots followed by the caption "Chaos is order yet undeciphered." The only scene where the mother has a physical presence takes place as a visit from her son, right after the meeting of the doubles in a hotel room. The lack of a wedding ring and the general demeanor communicates that it is Adam visiting. This short scene is filled with bizarre dialogue with a lot of hidden clues. Apparently informed of the meeting, the mother advises Adam to stop meeting strangers in hotel rooms for he has "enough trouble sticking with one woman." (Villeneuve, 2013). This is a strange remark considering Adam's unlikely character, however perfectly fitting for Anthony who had trouble with fidelity in the past indicating the shared identity of the two. Initially read as a demonstration of her controlling character, the mother brings blueberries for Adam which he declines, claiming not to like blueberries. The mother responds in surprise: "Of course you do." (Villeneuve, 2013) This little comment is actually a reference to an earlier scene where it is overtly indicated that it is Anthony who loves blueberries, not Adam.

Following the scene of Helen and Adam's interaction at the university, Anthony comes home supposedly from a run in a fervent state, asking about his blueberries:

Honey, where are the blueberries? Where are the blueberries? I told you like two days ago. The organic blueberries, not the conventional blueberries...I only say it 'cause I read in a magazine that blueberries, the organic blueberries are better...
(Villeneuve, 2013)

Although from the given quotation, it might seem like Anthony's liking of blueberries is overly highlighted, Villeneuve actually buries these lines in the background, while the scene focuses on Helen's state of mind after the contact with Adam. Therefore the babble about the blueberries goes above the audience's head. The denial of Adam being fond of blueberries is a subtle evidence of Anthony's suppression of one side of himself. The cryptic conversation goes further and the rubber meets the road when the mother advises Adam not to get involved with the double saying, "You have a respectable job. You have a nice apartment. And since we're being frank here, I think you should quit that fantasy of being a third rate movie actor." (Villeneuve, 2013) Let alone the fact that his apartment is far from nice, the mother's remarks on Adam's desire of becoming an actor is a clear signal of the shared identity. While it is Adam who does have a respectable job as a teacher, it is Anthony who is in the pursuit of an acting career. Despite being one of the shortest scenes in the film, the interaction with the mother is a breaking point in understanding the plot. Her confusing utterances blur the line between the existence of the two characters, suggesting a psychological trouble of sorts. The fact that she calls his acting career a "fantasy" and praises his "respectable" job is an evidence that Anthony's acting trials as an extra in films turned out fruitless and with the upcoming arrival of a baby he went back to a career as a history teacher. Right

after the mother's only scene a large spider is seen looming all over Toronto in slow motion.

The beginning of Anthony's psychosis can actually be traced down from clues left by the filmmaker all over the film, as well. In an interview with Mélanie Laurent, who plays Mary, she remembers asking Denis Villeneuve how long Adam and Mary have been together in her preparation for her part and Villeneuve answering "Just four months." (Laurent, 2013). This is important as to the start of the split in the psyche of the character for there are several more clues in the film regarding this timing. While searching for his double's place of residence, Adam pays a visit to the talent agency that Anthony is registered at, wearing funny-looking sunglasses as a disguise. The security officer recognizes him immediately, wondering his whereabouts since Anthony hasn't been around for some time, asking "How long has it been since I last saw you? I bet it's six months." (Villeneuve, 2013) These random dates tie together in a striking knot when Anthony's wife Helen drops by at Adam's university and the two have the odd interaction. As opposed to Helen's perplexed state of mind, Adam asks her cluelessly about how far along is the pregnancy to which Helen answers: "Six." (Villeneuve, 2014) To a careful eye watching all these cases indicates the break point of Anthony's life. Helen is six months pregnant which is how long Anthony has not been around his agency for a new acting role, probably because he took a job as a history teacher at a university to be able to support his expanding family. The creation of the delusion of his life as a double must have started around that time for Adam's imaginary relationship with Mary has been going on for only four months.

From the moment they meet in a hotel room to their phone conversations, all the instances that the doppelgangers are in the same location alone are imaginary, taking place inside Anthony's mind. The most significant one in terms of the narrative is the

rehearsed argument, resolved in them switching their partners which leads to the death of one of them similar to that of the novel. Before confronting Adam about supposedly sleeping with his wife, Anthony practices the fight in front of a mirror. Perhaps, he is not practicing but actually living the moment at that time. Next, Anthony is present at Adam's apartment somehow, although how he knows where Adam lives is not mentioned earlier. Anthony accuses Adam of sleeping with Helen, which Adam does not deny. Because obviously he *has* slept with her since the two men are the split of the same psyche. After agreeing on switching partners, Anthony promises to disappear from his life once he sleeps with Mary. This scene is important for marking the beginning of the psychological war started inside Anthony's mind to eliminate the toxic side of himself, to continue his life as a faithful husband and a father.

The journey of the doppelganger seem to end when Adam decides to take vengeance on Anthony by going back to his apartment to sleep with Helen, right when Anthony is away having sex with Mary, just like in *The Double*. Since the relationship with Mary was never real, the side of the psyche that is away with her is not real as well. Anthony suppresses his toxic side with uncontrollable sexual desires, that is Anthony, by sending him away to his fantasy world and brings Adam, the reliable and responsible side of himself, to the surface. So the events taking place in reality are the ones with "Adam" and Helen, whereas the scenes with Mary and Anthony are fictitious and all inside the mind. When together, Helen notices the timid behaviour in the man and understands something is changing, embracing him and asking "Did you have a good day at school?" (Villeneuve, 2013) Again, interpreted as her catching up on their partner switch game on the first watch, the question is actually a validation of the uniformity of the two men. When Mary notices the wedding ring line on Anthony's finger and demands to be taken back, just like in the novel, Adam wakes up at that exact moment, crying. From this point

onwards, the film intercuts between the two men so as to increase the tension further. As Anthony and Mary fight in the car, Helen begins comforting Adam upon seeing his tears, to which he replies saying “sorry.” Realizing the man she fell in love with has returned, Helen starts making out with him asking him to stay just when the car Anthony and Mary are in crashes terribly, causing their death. Anthony kills the toxic side of himself in a horrible car crash along with the mistress. The internal war is over. The toxic side is successfully eliminated and Adam is the winner.

The final and arguably the most shocking scene of the film takes place the next morning when Helen is in the shower and Adam discovers an envelope which has been a recurrent object that has been shown multiple times throughout the film, gathered from Anthony’s agency. Upon opening it, Adam finds a key, at which he stares longingly. This is the key to the underground sex club appearing in the opening montage. This is a burning temptation. When Helen informs him shouting of a missed phonecall from his mother, Adam replies by saying he is going out tonight. He has plans. At this point, *Enemy* surprises the audience in the most unexpected way. Not getting an answer back from Helen, Adam goes to the room to check on her finding Helen, turned into a giant spider retreating into the corner of the room. Shrieking and scared. Adam has a look of disappointment and he sighs. The war has not been won, it is starting to be waged again.

It is time to address the question hovering over the film, that is the spiders. Even if one figures out the general plot of *Enemy*, the largest controversy after the film’s release was over the presence of the spiders and what they meant. Examining the timing and the context of the emergence of the spiders on the screen deems their deciphering much easier. Described by the filmmaker as the rare and perfect image to represent the ideas of the novel, *Enemy* is haunted by the imagery of spiders connoting intelligence and elegance. From the web-like wires hanging above the city of Toronto that entrap Anthony

inside, to the broken windshield of the crashed car resembling a cobweb, Villeneuve has decorated the film with hidden spiders all over. The audience gets introduced to them in the opening montage at the sex club where a woman is about to squash a tarantula-like spider on a silver tray with her high heels as Anthony watches hungrily. Apart from two other face-to-face encounters, the spiders are presented more like a fantastic element such as an enormous one walking all over the foggy Toronto skyline, which is an apparent symbol for Anthony's foggy mind.

To put it briefly, spiders represent women, or at least how Anthony perceives them. Affected by his relationship with a despotic mother and his anxiety over being tied down due to Helen's pregnancy, Anthony manifests troubling patterns of thought towards women, both being drawn to them and repelled by them. The cause for the anxiety stems from his irrational fear of being dictated, hence the totalitarian and covert imagery of webs throughout the film. As it is well known, spiders entrap preys in their silky and sticky webs before devouring them. Female spiders of some species go as far as eating their male counterparts before or after mating. Considering all this, spiders are the perfect metaphor for Anthony's feeling of entrapment by his wife, mother and possibly, daughter. The constant emphasis on control, dictatorships, patterns and tyranny are all in reference to Anthony's anxiety resulting in this psychosis.

Similar to the introduction of the symbol at the sex club right after a phonecall from the mother where a woman was about to squish it as a representation of freedom crushing imprisonment, spiders arise after every tense interaction with a female. Likewise, Adam and Helen's uncomfortable encounter is followed by a bizarre dream of a naked woman with a head of a spider walking down a corridor, to which Adam and Anthony react by waking up at the same time, hinting to their shared mind. The only scene with the mother is pursued by the image of a giant spider with long legs roaming

over the city of Toronto, the symbol for Anthony's complicated mind. It is another interesting trivial fact that the design of this haunting spider is influenced by a sculpture situated in the city of Toronto, named "Maman", the mother spider. Villeneuve explains the inspiration saying, "I wanted to see that the spider was a beast that has the characteristic of a strong intelligence, and elegance. The best example that I found was this Louise Bourgeois sculpture." (Villeneuve, 2014) The despotic mother roams through Anthony's mind like a giant spider controlling every little move. Anthony's mother, who is portrayed as a sculptor with spider-like artwork herself in her apartment, was downplayed from the screenplay in order to make the connection between the spiders and the women subtler. Villeneuve illustrates later:

It's something that we worked a long time on. We had to make it more dynamic at one point, but this idea of the spider and the mother was a link that was a bit more obvious in the screenplay which we had to remove. Because I think it was too obvious. The way we approached this movie was very pretentious [*laughs*] because we were trying to do it on a concrete level and on the subconscious level at the same time. So it affects the audience on both levels. (Villeneuve, 2014)

Identifying the spiders as women deems the last horrifying scene where Helen turns into a large spider more sensible. Besides her peculiar transformation, her shrieking reaction upon seeing Anthony and his detached acceptance are what makes the scene that more puzzling. After his declaration upon seeing the key of not coming back home that night, Helen immediately understands that the pattern is back in motion just when she thought it was over. The thought clearly terrifies her. Because the narcissistic and unfaithful side has not been exterminated but returned yet again; Helen is afraid of getting squashed by this unbeatable being. Anthony's expression of weariness upon seeing his

wife's reaction is of acceptance of his repetitious and cyclical life. The battle has not ended after all.

Although, from afar *Enemy* is quite different than *Arrival*, the latter being more mainstream in the theme and the execution compared to the former; the two actually share much common ground. Unconventionally, both films prefer telling their stories in a non-linear format. Similar to the circular structure of *Arrival*, *Enemy* awakens a sense of circle or a repetition. Both films seemingly break the chronological order, but in different manners. While *Arrival* consists of intercutting between flashforwards and present moments, *Enemy* cuts between what is real and fictional and, just like *Arrival*, opens with the ending scene suggesting a circular structure as well. *Enemy* opens with a voicemail from the mother, while Anthony is at the sex club and Helen at home, sitting naked on the bed. The film ends with a moment earlier, a missing call from the mother, Anthony about to leave for the sex club as Helen is a spider in her room. Although this idea suggests that *Enemy*'s nature is cyclical like that of *Arrival*'s, it can also be a reference to the idea of patterns and repetition. As Adam has said earlier in the film, "it was Hegel who said that all the great... greatest world events happen *twice*, and then Karl Marx added: *the first time it was a tragedy; the second time it was a farce.*" (Villeneuve, 2013). Along those lines, Anthony seems to be repeating his pattern for the second time and the mundanity of it becomes a farce.

To sum up with Linda Hutcheon's words, "no text is a fixed thing: there are always a variety of manuscript versions, revisions and print editions." (Hutcheon, 1989) Although constituting the largest amount of the discourse, novel adaptations have not become smooth sailing over time. Each project is unique to its own, depending both on the complexity of the chosen source material and the personal expression of the adaptor. With every reproduction the concept of originality is challenged and especially reserved

notions such as identity are examined. Similar to what is authentically done by Saramago in *The Double* and Villeneuve in *Enemy*, the study of adaptation sheds light on the relationship between an “original” and “copy”. As Villeneuve says, “I think that an audience can understand concepts or ideas that are poetic and strange from an emotional point of view but from an intellectual point of view it would be trying for the audience to have to process” (Villeneuve, 2014) And as Saramago writes, “There are some things you just can’t explain in words.” (Saramago, 2002)

5. CHAPTER FOUR: Come Full Circle

“But I say your story begins with a promise, to break the chain of anger.” (Villeneuve, 2010)

Repetition in music hijacks your brain. In her book *On Repeat: How Music Plays the Mind* Elizabeth Margulis, taking an interdisciplinary approach connecting music, cognition psychology, neurology and linguistics, explains the tendency to repeat and the effects of repetition in music on human psyche. In her quest to find solid evidence to the reasons for people prefer music that they are already familiar with, Margulis has conducted an experiment with people with either no special musical training or with PhD holding music theorists. She had them listen to different music some of which was altered to be more repetitive. The results showed that everyone, regardless of their musical training, preferred the repetitive versions as more likable. She claims:

Regardless of how we might or might not be intellectually committed to the ideas just described, there’s something about rehearsing the same piece exactly the same way again and again that lulls us into a sense of its special “rightness”. On the first hearing the sounds might seem to have been put together haphazardly, but each

time we go down the musical path etched out by the piece, its track gets deeper and deeper, such that we fall down it more and more easily, until it carries with it some sense of inevitable rather than accidental reality. This is an inevitability that we *feel* rather than believe. (Margulis, 2013, p. 77)

Similarly to what Margulis noticed, the formation of a cycle through repetitions is quite essential to human beings.

Some effects of repetition, including an emergent sense of inevitability or rightness, can depend on a lack of awareness that repetition itself is mediating the experience. Some support for this notion comes from data showing that the mere exposure effect, Zajonc's (1968) finding that the simple re-presentation of a stimulus could increase subjective ratings of it, not only held but actually intensified when the stimuli were presented subliminally, outside of conscious awareness... As long as people are not expressly aware of the extent of their prior experiences with a piece, they are particularly liable to misjudge repetition effects as consequences of particular stimulus characteristics. (Margulis, 2013, p. 80)

This repetitive cyclical structure of human-made products has been discussed through different lenses of sociology, mathematics, psychology and finances by people ranging from Vilfredo Pareto (1848, 1923) and Pitirim A. Sorokin (1889-1968) to Arthur Schlesinger (1917-2007) and P.R. Sarkar (1921-1990).

Repetition and cyclicity have been discussed since ancient times. Anaximander of Greece claimed that "everything must return again to the primal mass whence it sprang only to be produced anew." (qtd. in Kumar, 2003, p. 3) The long history of the core notion of a cyclic nature of life can also be traced back to Indian culture. According to Subhash Kak, the conception owes its roots to three essential ideas from earlier texts,

such as: the infinity of time and space, the decentered position of earth in the universe and every action occurring including both creation and destruction are conducted by laws of the universe. (Kak, 2008, p. 12) This intertwined structure of the physical and the mental in the Indian culture contributed to the recursive concept of cyclicity and repetition of human life all present in The Vedas, Upanishads and similar literary productions.

In their most basic sense, narratives have an Aristotelian beginning, middle and an end, linked by causality and situated in time and space, meaning that “events and happenings are configured into a temporal unity by means of a plot” (Polkinghorne, 1995, p. 5). Thus, the notion of repetition in narratives implies the occurrence of an already told story to serve a particular function, albeit not in its entirety for some aspects might have evolved, but the core idea has remained intact and repeated (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 2). Repetition, in this respect, can be likened to adaptation as a concept for the story which seemingly repeats itself in another medium. Whether deliberate or not, when stories are retold, they serve specific function altering the meaning behind the previous version (Polster, 1987, p. 26). The first narrative and its repetition, thus, are both identical and different at the same time: “the fabula elements are the same, but the meaning has changed” (Sullivan, 2017 & Bal, 2009, p. 53). The situated context as a vital aspect of narrative repetition, affects the meaning even though the story might stay the same to the point.

In his book *Fiction and Repetition* (1982), J. Hillis Miller discusses the repetition concept mainly within the genre of novels, which can be applied to drama as well, claiming that: “In a novel, what is said two or more times may not be true, but the reader is fairly safe in assuming that it is significant” (Miller, 1982, p. 1-2). He divides the concept of repetition, following Deleuze’s ideas, into two forms, one developed by Plato and the other by Nietzsche. Claiming the two generally intertwine and are mutually

dependent, Miller uses Plato's notion of repetition, according to which all that stems from one common ground will have each copy holding slight differences: "What Deleuze calls 'Platonic' repetition is grounded in a solid archetypal model which is untouched by the effects of repetition. All the other examples are copies of this model," which can be seen in literature as well: "(...) The validity of the mimetic copy is established by its truth of correspondence to what it copies" (Miller, 1982, p. 6). The last section of the given quote by Miller on the similarity to the initial providing the validity of the repetition, raises certain questions regarding the nature of repetition, i.e. whether slight changes deem the second version less of a repetition. This is where Nietzsche's claim is most useful. His notion of repetition "posits a world based on difference" (Miller, 1982, p. 6). Unlike Plato's, Nietzsche's view regards each thing as intrinsically unique, without copies, although one thing might repeat another. Miller clarifies Nietzsche's form by drawing upon Walter Benjamin's explanations of dreams in which whatever is manifested might actually symbolize something else. One is just aware of the meaning behind the symbol, or as Benjamin utters: "It was a sock, but it was my mother too." (Miller, 1982, p.7). This link establishing a similarity in things that are not necessarily identical can be reflected into literature as well when making sense of the concept of repetition. Miller argues, repetition can and must be representations of both forms of repetitions as once, although the writer of the text might prefer one over the other: "(...) each form of repetition inevitably calls up the other as its shadow companion. You cannot have one without the other. The difference between one text and another from this point of view is the varying modes of intertwining" (Miller, 1982).

Returning to cinema from literature, Deleuze has exciting ideas towards repetition and cycles in both cinema and literature. In his *Difference and Repetition* (1968), Deleuze says that generalization does not equal repetition and "Generality presents two major

orders: the qualitative order of resemblances and the quantitative order of equivalences. Cycles and equalities are their respective symbols.” (Deleuze, 2004) Easily connected to the earlier concept of the doppelgänger, the cycles recall the idea of an intertextual cinematic repetition of something essential. Deleuze also considers the filmic double as the manifestation of repetition. On the concept of repetition in a cinematic discussion, Constantin Verevis’ work is a fruitful resource for it draws from Deleuze and Barthes both, with the idea of “re-reading” in order to emphasize the different types of repetition occurring in film production, spectatorship, and scholarship. Barthes comments on his idea of re-reading, which can be linked to repetitions for their similarity in the structure and function, that they are not “re-presentations[s] of identity (a re-discovery of the same), but the re-production—the creation and the exhibition—of the difference that lies at the heart of repetition” (Barthes, 1974 & Verevis, 2005, p. 25). Deleuze reinforces Barthes’ perspective in his comment: “Repetition can always be 'represented' as extreme resemblance or perfect equivalence, but the fact that one can pass by degrees from one thing to another does not prevent their being different in kind.” (Deleuze, 1968, p. 2) Thus, the repetition of an artwork in the new medium does not render its uniqueness an inferiority, but a strength in its own right. Besides, the act of repetition does not only manifest itself as a whole new artwork but can be found in the details of both the literary source material and the following film adaptation.

In this chapter, the focal point will be the notions of repetition and cyclicity as revealed in the ghastly intense play *Scorched* (2003) by the Lebanese-Canadian playwright Wajdi Mouawad and its radical re-imagining, *Incendies* (2010), by Denis Villeneuve. *Scorched*, Mouawad’s best known work, is an epic tale which is set in motion by the character Nawal Marwan’s death and the reading of her will by her twin children, Simon and Jeanne. Each are assigned the task of delivering a letter from their

mother to their long-lost father and to an older brother, whose existence had been a secret till their mother's death. This duty leads Jeanne and Simon to their mother's native land which is left unnamed in the story, yet sharply resembles civil war Lebanon. After a series of investigations there, the tragic revelation of the story occurs when the twins come to the realization that their birth is a result of an incestuous rape, and that the rapist father, Abou Tarek, is actually their older brother who was separated from Nawal at his birth. Once again, Villeneuve intertwines the concepts of time, duality and repetition through his storytelling, whether intentionally or not. And, once again, Villeneuve takes on another genre, theatre to adapt with *Incendies*, in addition to the short story and the novel that made the topic of the previous chapters.

Before delving into the central story of the chapter, it is essential to understand the importance of theatre in the larger discourse of adaptation. When speaking of stage to film adaptations what immediately comes to mind is either Shakespeare, or Broadway musicals since those are among the most popular examples of a play on the silver screen. However, the link between cinema and theatre goes much deeper than that. Because of the apparent visual and structural similarities between the two artforms, it is easy to assume that the process of adapting a play into film is smooth-sailing since a play is acted out "just like a film" anyway. Granted, even the shooting script of a film resembles a play script in many respects. Unlike that of a novel or a short story, a play delivers directions regarding the look and the sound of the story which are essential parts of a film as well. Nevertheless, it would be incorrect to conclude that the adaptation process is less troublesome. Despite the fact that a play cannot be seen merely as literary form for it is written to be acted out, scholars have treated stage-to-film adaptations similar to the way they do with novel adaptations and did not deem the genre significant enough to analyze in its own right. In fact, theatre plays constitute the most adapted source materials in the

recent years with %40, coming second only to novels (McFarlane, 2007, p. 40). Thus, stage-to-film adaptations can be seen as the second most important area of study for adaptation studies.

As the largely accepted genre of adaptation and the buildingstock of the discourse, novels have been seen to be in possession of a cinematic ‘voice’: “what novels and films more strikingly have in common is the potential and the propensity for narrative. And narrative, at certain levels, is undeniably... the chief transferable element” (McFarlane, 1996, p. 12). Contrary to the adaptation process of a novel in which an alteration of time, environment or cast is readily achievable in film for none of them were constructed to be visual anyway, adapting a stage play brings forth distinct challenges to the adaptor, starting with the relocation of a spoken-word-reliant narrative from an established format (limited sets, scenes and characters) to a visual-based film format. The challenges brought forth with a stage-to-film stem from the proximity of the two artforms:

Both are performance arts that ordinarily involve an audience gathering at a prescribed time in a theatre to witness a scheduled event (like dance and live music and unlike painting, sculpture and novels). Both, traditionally at least, are narrative (they tell stories) and mimetic (they represent life). (Hurt, 1974, p. 383)

A historical survey reveals that the very young art of cinema was born towards the end of the 19th century whereas theatre dates back to the 6th century BCE. Before cinema became the main mass entertainment channel theatre was the place where stories were told visually. Thus, hundreds of years worth of classic pieces seemed like the best platform to build cinema on. Stage-to-film adaptations became a regularity, some of which won cinema’s highest prizes. “Cinema adopted, modified and refunctionalized theatrical techniques of representation” (?). Shakespeare is the best example of the success

of plays in cinematic setup, all of whose plays have been a staple in cinema history.

Although the essential ingredients of stage plays and screenplays are basically the same – a story brought to life by actors- cinema is very different in structure and execution from theatre. Susan Sontag claimed that the success of a film adaptation of a play is usually evaluated by how the source material was rearranged and displaced (Sontag, 1964, p. 362). Additionally, Linda Seger advocates divergence from the source material saying that in the phase of selection, one should search for a realistic context that can be explored and a storyline that can be developed (Seger, 1990, p. 50).

In order to get further into stage-to-film adaptations, it is essential to analyze how the two differ and to go over the challenges and degrees of the adaptation processes. The features of relatability of each art differs as a result of the different nature of the mediums. Since the two arts are very close both historically and structurally, the point of their differentiation becomes of vital relevance to scholars. According to Gregory Waller, the first ever debate concerning the issue was over the spoken word, as the most obvious distinction between the two arts, back whe the cinema was invented. (Waller, 1983, p. 388-424) Because films were silent when they were first came about, theatre was known as the realm of the spoken word while cinema was regarded as being word-free.

Despite the acting techniques, staging and visual formatting that were directly influenced by theatre vanishing over time, it was still a common idea that “the theatre is for the ear, and the film is for the eye” (Biberman, in Waller, 1983, p. 388) Although the invention of the talkies abolished this opinion, Waller believes the opposition between the scholars of each sides endured, with theatre supporters advocating the genuine presence of man on stage whereas those supporting the cinema admiring the presence of the world on the screen (Waller, 1983, p. 400). These two mediums are alleged to be subjected to a “separate but equal” theory, meaning that each is at its best when they stay in their own

limits. This approach clearly denies an intertextual reading. Thus, Waller claims that “the clearly defined, mutually exclusive approaches to the stage/screen debate” that had been going on since the 1910’s still “persist with little modification, today.” (Waller, 1983, p. 405)

David Bordwell weighs in on the issue expressing the general scholarly view of cinema in the early stages, “The core of cinematic expression is editing” (Bordwell, 2016, p. 1). He explains that editing was seen as the definitive aspect of the art that separated it from other types of media, rendering the film both like a picture in a single shot and a dramatization in consecutive shots. According to him, those who oppose to cinema claimed that it was simply filmed theatre. However, Bordwell’s claim is that film image is just as “uniquely cinematic” as editing itself. A film image is moving unlike a still painting; it is also a two dimensional dramatization unlike a theatre stage. One of the notable reference books on the issue, focusing on the 1919’s, is Ben Brewster and Lea Jacobs’ *Theatre to Cinema: Stage Pictorialism and the Early Feature Film* (Oxford, 1997) in uncovering and questioning the long and rich relationship between theatre and cinema.

While previous accounts of the relationship between cinema and theatre tended to assume that early filmmakers had to break away from the stage in order to establish a specific aesthetic for the new medium, *Theatre to Cinema* argues that the cinema turned to the pictorial, spectacular tradition of the theatre in the 1910s, to establish a model for feature filmmaking. These approaches definitely did shape the critical debate concerning the relationship between the two arts, both in academic and critical realms. One way to widen the horizon on this discussion might be through the act of adaptation, which blurs the strictly drawn lines between the two and subverts the generalities of this historical debate. As previously mentioned, except for Shakespeare’s works and musicals,

adaptation discourse has overlooked the originality of stage adaptations for they land in a gray area belonging neither to cinema nor theatre. Film adaptations of theatre play require a sharp transition from verbal to visual medium, reducing the textual content in amount and expressiveness, then replacing those with visual expressions. Too much reliance on the dramatic text might hinder the cinematic means of expression. The trouble with the adaptation of plays is that it is difficult to find a recording of the visual performance and the script lacks a description of setting regarding staging and performance to create a visual point of reference, since the focal point is generally dialogue. Everything known about a character stems from the dialogue of a play. Where a novel might leave information about a character's appearance out for imaginative purposes, a stage play must ensure that information for the resulting product is a visual performance. When that certain information is left out, the adaptor is forced to take liberties from the source material via substituting it with something "cinematic". The situation might be different when the playwright is involved, to some extent, in the adaptation process of the film. Studying the high-fidelity 1950's adaptations where the playwright is mostly involved in the project as the screenwriter, Phyllis Zatlin attributes their success to them being "surprisingly faithful to their source" (Zatlin, 2005, p. 197). She believes that cinematic devices generally do not alter what the author originally imagined, yet still have the "potential for transmitting new meanings, intentional or not" (Zatlin, 2005, p. 188).

Another scholar whose ideas defined cinematic adaptations of plays in film studies, André Bazin, unsurprisingly defends the preservation of the "essence" during the adaptation process. Following the haunting fidelity approach, Bazin suggests that a successful adaptation must "retain the dramatic force of the play in the medium that reflects it" (Bazin, 1971, p. 107). This does not purely represent a transfer of the dramatic aspect of the play; it demands maintaining the theatrical features of the drama, meaning

that cinema must surrender to the conceptions of an alien art. Bazin concludes that, “there are no plays that cannot be brought to the screen... provided one can visualize a reconversion of stage space” (Bazin, 1971, p. 123).

Bazin argues that the “essence” of theatre might actually be transferable successfully and it does not rely on the presence of an actor, since cinema achieves a similar sense of cinema through the moving image. Bazin remarks that the essence of theatre comes from the mutual awareness of the spectator and the actor of their setting which is separate from the actual world. On the other hand, cinema alienates the spectator by depersonalisation, requiring only passivity instead of the intellectual activeness of theatre (Bazin, 1971, p. 123). However, as Raitt puts forth, the cinema audience is well aware of the illusion of reality illustrated by film as a distinct setting from the real world, as well (Raitt, 2011, p. 1).

Although he, too, seems to be captivated with the phantom notion of an essence, Bazin believes that the act of transmitting the story to a new medium such as cinema, involuntarily leads to a whole new work of art, agreeing that the camera is free to shoot action from any angle and “free the spectator from his seat” (Bazin, 1971, p. 86). He advocates film adaptations that provide multiple viewpoints to the spectator, by preserving the drama of the spectacle that was present in the theatre play and adding on a subjective viewpoint of the character, calling it “staging a play by means of cinema” (Bazin, 1971, p. 87). A theatre stage is a restricted area where the spectator is mostly static, watching the play unfold from the same exact place with a very extended frame. It is not possible to visually focus on single detail or to substitute a closeup in theatre, and the only means to get attention to a chosen element might be through lighting or dialogue. In cinema, on the other hand, that restriction is eliminated, through multiple camera, framing and lighting techniques, specifically chosen by the filmmaker. In fact, these

techniques elevate the narrative in a motion Picture, differentiating it from an artificial “theatrical” impression, for a film generally strives for realism. As Gianakaris argues, the success of a stage-to-film adaptation relies on “the degree of realism in the source drama and the resulting picture,” whereas a stage play’s essential component is the *suspension of disbelief* (Gianakaris, 1985, p. 86). With his study of 1950’s film adaptations of plays by Tennessee Williams, Geraghty highlights, quoting Bazin, the fact that “the dramatic force of the text and its performance is lost if cinema makes us ‘forget the boundaries of the stage’” (Geraghty, 2008, p. 86).

Contemporary play to film adaptations are much more adventurous than their 1950’s counterparts, an example being the focal literary work of this chapter, i.e. Wajdi Mouawad’s *Scorched* (2003). The play was named *Incendies* in its original language which became the title of its adaptation; however, in order not to confuse the two in the analysis, the play will be referred to with its English print title *Scorched*.

Mouawad was born in Lebanon in 1968 and immigrated, or rather fled, to France in 1977 and then to Canada in 1983, leaving behind a 15-year civil war in his motherland. He describes himself as, “Lebanese in his childhood, French in his way of thinking and Quebecois in his theatre.” (Côté, 2005, p. 1) Unique, with multiple talents as writer, director and a performer, Wajdi Mouawad is one of the most-produced playwrights in Canada and France, attracting people from all cultures and generations. Speaking of his fluid sense of identity which is clearly reflected in his dramatic characters, Mouawad says, “Personally, I feel strange in my relationship with my mother tongue. I am a little lost” (tsd Méchant, 2004, p. 1) Although he writes in Quebecois (French Canadian), his work surpasses barriers of language, as it exposes universally relatable themes and dramatic situations speaking to all. Founding and leading multiple theatre productions, Mouawad won many awards, starting with his first play *Willy Protogoras enfermé dans*

les toilettes, winning le Grand Prix de la Critique from the Association québécoise des critiques de théâtre, after his graduation from the National Theater School in 1991. From 2016 onward, Mouawad became the director of the Theatre national de la Colline in Paris. With a strong suit in narrative structure and poetic intensity, his plays have been translated into many languages and have been played in various national and international venues.

“Written over an extended ten-month rehearsal period” (Mouawad, 2005, p. 1), with actors contributing to the writing and performance process, *Scorched*’s first act opens in the notary Hermille Lebel’s office, as he reads Nawal Marwan’s will and testament to her twins, Janine and Simon. Alongside some items left as legacy, she gives them instructions as to her burial: naked, face down, without a coffin or a gravestone since there should be “no epitaph for those who don’t keep their promises... for those who keep their silence” (Mouawad, 2003, p. 6). The twins are, then, handed an envelope each, one to be given to their unknown father and one addressed to their brother, whose existence was unbeknownst to them. Once the letters are delivered, Nawal’s grave will be deserving of a gravestone with her name on it. Since Nawal spent last five years of her life in silence, her son Simon perceives the will as a symptom of insanity, whereas Janine agrees to complete the tasks. After this point, the play keeps switching between the past and present of Nawal’s life and the twins’ search for their origins. Nawal’s story starts at the age of fourteen with a love affair with Wahab, a refugee, from whom she gets pregnant. Before the baby boy is taken away from her, Nawal manages to hide a red clown nose with his swaddle and takes an oath: “No matter what happens, I will always love you” (Mouawad, 2003, p. 35). Left purposeless after the separation, Nawal spends her time wandering around until her grandmother, Nazira, makes her take another oath to get educated, in order to break the family’s cycle of anger and poverty. Fulfilling her

grandmother's dying wish, Nawal commits herself to finding her lost son, during which she befriends Sawda whom she teaches how to read and write in exchange for singing lessons. In the course of the search, Nawal and Sawda visit orphanages deserted by refugees due to militia attacks. Nawal decides to follow the refugees only to witness a gruesome massacre of refugees who were set on fire in a bus from which she could barely escape.

The second half opens with Janine traveling back to her mother's village in the native land, investigating her footsteps. Arriving at Kfar Rayat prison, which became a museum, Janine learns about the prisoner number 72, "the woman who sings." Going back to Nawal and Sawda, at the age of forty, as ex-editors of a resistance newspaper that is now burnt and closed down. Driven by the longing for her son and the injustice present in the country, Janine decides to assassinate the paramilitary leader, posing as a tutor to his child. Janine discovers through a photograph handed by the museum janitor that the prisoner number seventy-two, "the woman who sings", is her mother Nawal. The janitor as the only survivor from prison days recounts Nawal's story of imprisonment, torture and rape she went through by the torturer Abou Tarek. Upon learning this, Janine calls her brother Simon, igniting him on the journey as well to find his brother. As the final clue to solve the mystery, Janine finds out that at the age of sixty Nawal confronted Abou Tarek about the crimes he had committed. At the same time, Simon reads her mother's testimony from an inherited red notebook and meets with Chamseddine, a former leader of the resistance, who informs Simon about a man with a substantial connection to Nawal, Nihad Harmanni, a sniper during wartime who was also a prison torturer known by the name Abou Tarek. The tragic full circle of the story is that Nawal's rapist Abou Tarek is her son, Nihad Harmanni, as well as her twins, Janine and Simon's father. The twins' are the product of an incestuous rape.

Always incorporating fiction with his own biographical truths, Mouawad chooses to handle moralistic topics of identity, heritage and cultural alienation. The burden and fortune of having the fluidity in his displaced identity reveals itself in his artistic work: almost all of his plays feature characters in search for their true identity. Very much influenced by Greek tragedies, mainly Oedipus Rex, his plays work like epics of the ancient proving that no matter how much time passes, humanity stays the same at the core. Either survivors or descendants of those who survived tragedies, the characters of Mouawad set on a journey to the past of both inner and outer struggle regarding their roots, generally incited by a death in the family, which is the case in *Scorched* as well. The intellectually stimulating play is a mystery mixture of emigration, civil war, solitude, and the repetition of trauma inside a family and is also politically relevant and heartbreakingly poetic. Unbeknown to many, the play is actually a part of a tetralogy “*Le Sang des promesses*” by Mouwad, each eliciting an element from nature; *Littoral* (1999) as water, *Scorched* (2003) as fire, *Forêts* (2007) as earth and *Ciels* (2009) as air, all of which explore how fragmented the identity becomes in times of crisis.

Scorched is an intensely poetic and personal play which was produced on stage more than one hundred times in its native language and granted Mouawad the title Chevalier des Artes et des Lettres by the French government. Although the Middle Eastern setting echoes war-time Lebanon, the country is actually not specified in the play. Mouwad told the Globe and Mail that he tried being more overtly political and name the nationality, “but everytime... the poetry and the theater stray away from me. I stop and they come back... Every time I speak about a Middle East tragedy, I can’t name it.” (The Globe and Mail, May 3, 2011) Mouawad manages to stay mythically apolitical while handling very critical political themes in the play to reach his ultimate goal of putting forth a statement on wars driven by race or religion free of any attachment to a single

place. *Scorched* simultaneously tells two intertwining storylines moving back and forth over fifty years, sometimes capturing two distinct time frames on the stage at the same time, by employing theatrical techniques of mise en abyme, repetition and simultaneity. The play stands out as structural complex work, with a central motif of identity which is traced through a matriarchal line. Mouwad explains the argument of *Scorched* as:

A woman has just died. Her name was Nawal Marwan. She has left to her twins a red notebook, a blue cloth jacket and two envelopes carrying a heavy demand: so many boxes of Pandora unveiled in front of notary and who will open access to his silence and its secrets, as many sources of evils and wonders, whose content will lead Jeanne and Simon in an initiatory odyssey to a past unknown, towards a distant continent, towards a second birth ... (translated: Programme, TNM)

The play begins with the bewildered twins, Janine and Simone Marwan, trying to decipher their mother Nawal's will which assigns each of them a letter to deliver to their long-lost father and their older brother, whose existence was unbeknownst to them. With the help of their notary Hermile Lebel who becomes the pioneer of this recreation process pushing the twins to complete the tasks given, the pair travel back to their native land in pursuit of their unknown family members. The play dramatizes the twins' uncovering of their mother's secret life simultaneously with Nawal's past experiences, starting with Nawal's unplanned pregnancy at the age of fourteen. Unfortunately, the baby is taken away from her after which she swears to find and love her baby son no matter what.

The protagonist of the play is, noticeably, Nawal Marwan for she is the one who ignites both storylines. Throughout all stages Nawal persists and resists against the system that forces her unconditional obedience. As mentioned earlier, the play progresses in both storylines, of Nawal and of her twins, simultaneously through temporal detachment

creating a repetition of the same situation on stage at the same time. The display of past and present of the play is essential for the character study of Nawal with her own journey and her secrets manifesting as her children explore her history. One is reminded of Deleuze's statement: "synthesis constitutes time as a living present, and the past and future as dimensions of this present," connecting the simultaneity and the repetition of events through Jeanne's revisiting. (Deleuze, 2004, p. 90) Although the play is Nawal's story from different time periods, the resolution of several conflicts and her self-confidence are not disclosed until the end of act four: *Fire of Sarwan*. After that, the contrast gives way to simultaneity as Nawal turns into a mere spectator of her twins' actions as they are in search for pieces from people to complete their mother's history. The general approach of *Scorched*'s towards this multilayered temporal structure of contrasts and simultaneities can be summed up with an example in Scene four, "The Conjecture to Solve". When asked about why she decided to take on the journey as she is about to take the letter meant for her brother, Janine answers:

In mathematics, $1 + 1$ is not 1, 9, or 2.2. They make 2. Whether you are in a good mood or very unhappy, 1 and 1 are 2. We all belong to a polygon. I thought I knew my place in the polygon. I thought I was at that point that only sees her brother Simon and her mother Nawal. Today, I learn that it is possible that from the point I occupy, I can see my father too; I also learn that there is another member of this polygon, another brother. The graph of visibility that I have always traced is null and false. What is my place in the polygon? To find, you have to solve a conjecture. (Mouawad, 2003, p. 75)

During her lecture on graph theory, Janine suddenly starts drawing similarities between math and her familial struggles, making sense of her world through mathematics and situates herself in relation to her society with numbers and equations. Feeling the lack

of words in an effort the unique situation of repetition resulting in the simultaneity, Jeanne resorts to mathematics. Similarly, towards the end of the play after the reveal of the incestuous family, Simon does the same. The stage directions of this scene marks the first instance of simultaneity: “Jeanne goes out. Nawal (14 years old) is in the office” (Mouawad, 2003, p. 28). Deleuze comments on this synthesis occurring in the mind through these images and characters repeated “successive, independent instants to one another” calling it a “time synthesis” as co-existing of past, present and future which is very fitting in the case of *Scorched*. (Deleuze, 2005, p. 100-103) Likewise, overlay of names appear during the transition to Scene five: “What is there”. As fourteen-year-old Nawal’s lover, Wahab, calls for her, the notary Lebel answers Janine on the phone saying: “Your mother knew your father when she was very young” (Mouawad, 2003, p. 64). The switch from the twins’ journey to Nawal’s past experiences is administrated through dialogue, as can be seen from the above example.

In the following scenes, the reader witnesses Nawal’s conception of her first child from her lover Wahab and her separation from both. After breaking the news of her pregnancy, Nawal is faced with a severe opposition from her family, especially from her mother who allows her to give birth, however, she gives him away to an orphanage. This separation causes Nawal to utter the oath that shapes the storyline of the whole play: “For you and for me I will tell him. I will whisper in his ear: ‘Whatever happens, I will always love you ...’ and childhood will be a knife that I will plant in the throat” (Mouawad, 2003, p. 31).

The hatred and anger demonstrated by Nawal towards her mother turns out to be a recurring curse of a mother-daughter relationship in their family, revealed by Nawal’s grandmother: “the women of our family, have been stuck in anger for so long”. She also encourages her to educate herself in order to break the cycle of anger (Mouawad, 2003, p. 57). In its most basic form, repetition is a core component of social systems since

“structure implies a repetitive relationship between two or more individuals” (Goldspink & Kay, 2009, p. 3). In Marwans’ case the repetition of hatred and anger destroyed their inner selves of unity and became utterly destructive. Hence, Mouawad utilizes the concept of repetition and cyclicity not only in technical terms with temporal duality and simultaneity but also inside the context of the story.

The second temporal change occurs from past to present in the Scene ten, “Burial of Nawal”, where a link between the grandmother and Nawal becomes clear with a repetition of dialogue and action possessing differences in themselves. Before her death, the grandmother asks Nawal to make a promise, “you, Nawal, when you learn to write, come back, and engrave my mom on the stone. Grave my name because I kept my promises” (Mouawad, 2003, p. 32-33). In her will, Nawal requests to be buried naked without a coffin, facing down in the grave and assigns Janine, Simon and the notary Lebel to throw bucket of water over her body before filling up the grave. She writes recalling the grandmother’s dying wish, “No stone will be placed on my grave / And my name engraved nowhere. / No epitaph for those who do not keep their promises” (Mouawad, 2003, p. 126). Fittingly, the stage directions in the funeral scene repeat Nawal’s burial requestes: “*They put it down into a hole. Each launches on her body a bucket of water*” (Mouawad, 2003, p. 126). Instead of utilizing dialogue, Mouawad uses the notary Lebel’s phone’s sound to connect the past to the present: “*Jeanne. Simon in a cemetery. Hermile Lebel picks up*” (Mouawad, 2003, p. 126). The temporal shifts between past and present in *Scorched* are an essential aspect of the theatrical technique used by Mouawad in his examination of complex identity and cycles of anger inside a family. Through visual repetition the playwright aims for a visual metaphor to support the build up of perpetual moral problems of the Marwans.

Repetition means getting our cognitive and moral bearings not through prompted remembering, but quite unexpectedly as a gift from the unknown, as a revelation from the future. Repetition is epiphany that sometimes grants the old again, as new, and sometimes grants something radically new. (Mooney, 2009, p. 8)

The final scene of the first act, "Fire of Nawal", marks an important moment between Janine and her mother's nurse, Antoine, who spent her final days with her while Nawal was going through a period of silence for five long years before her death. During this time, curious Antoine hid a recording device beneath her bed at night; "I hesitated. I did not have the right. If she speaks alone, it's her choice. So I promised myself never to listen. Recorded without her ever knowing" (Mouawad, 2003, p. 130). To Janine's knowledge, Nawal's final words were, "'Now that we are together it's better'" (Mouawad, 2003, p. 90) and she wants to know whether her mother disclosed more with Antoine in her final years. With the tapes received from the nurse, Janine spends the rest of the play listening through her mother's silence alongside her life experiences, which ends up having a strong influence on her. Mouawad draws similarities between the mother and the daughter with such links like the recording of her breathing. Since the repetition in the family is hereditary, or one might call a curse, the presence of the daughter following her mother's footsteps looks very much like a photocopy. In Scene twenty-three, "Life around the Knife", as Nawal and her friend Sawda's conflict with two menacing militamen ends, the stage direction states: "Sawda pulls out a pistol and fires two shots, one after the other. The militamen fall. Jeanne passes, listening to the silence of her mother" (Mouawad, 2003, p. 60). At that moment, with Nawal as a young woman with Sawda, and Nawal as silence recorded on tape share the stage, which is the perfect example of simultaneity and repetition. Janine's passing through the significant moments of her mother's past allows Nawal to revisit those moments not as a victim, but as a

survivor. The daughter and the mother's link renders them one; therefore, Janine's act of investigation turns out to be redemptive for her mother. "Repetition is connected to the power of difference in terms of productive process that produces variation in and through every repetition" (Parr, 2010, p. 225).

Mouawad utilizes war and violence almost like individual characters in the play who act as an obstacle in Nawal's search for her lost son and the tragic revelation of his identity in the form of cyclical destruction, devastation, revenge and loss of innocence. Nawal's first encounter with the devastating consequences of a civil war occur in the seventeenth Scene, "Orphanage of Kfar Rayat", a wrecked orphanage she visits in search of her son which turns out fruitless. Overwhelmed, Nawal kneels down where the children slept, uttering: "now that we are together, it is better" (Mouawad, 2003, p. 90). Mouawad links this moment directly to Nawal's death with the repetition of her dying words with Antoine appearing on stage upon hearing and rushing to call Janine. Since Mouawad's language is heavily poetic, it is fitting to recall "In poetry, repetition creates a sense of expectation (and therefore tension when that expectation is not, for a while, satisfied" (Redmond, 2006, p. 56). Although what is meant by repetition in this given quote is the repetition of sounds, Mouawad's repetition of utterances construct an akin sense of expectation.

Densely populated with poetic monologues and with an abstract staging, Mouawad's mythic tale employs three different actresses to play Nawal Marwan; the first, aged 14 as she gives birth to and then gets separated from her son; the second, middle-aged, imprisoned and tortured as she give birth to her twins; finally, the third, aged 60, as she identifies her son and falls into a five year-long silence until her death. "In a work of art, different acts, episodes, occurrences melt and fuse into unity, and yet do not disappear or lose their own character as they do so." (Ross, 1994, p .206) The narrative

structure constantly clashes with the storyline, mixing different time periods with different characters rather than telling a straightforward story. Having directed *Oedipus Rex* on stage himself, Mouawad constructs a narrative resembling a Greek tragedy tangled with contemporary elements such as Nihad humming 80's pop music. This, however, does not obstruct the overwhelming emotional impact of the plot.

The play narrates its traumatic investigation of patriarchal lineage with a stress upon maternal heritage of female friendship, motherly love, and female intimacy. Right at the center of all the violence and war, women form loving bonds in spite of the patriarchal system, as a symbol of a different kind of justice, implying that a trial might not always be the ultimate solution for victims. *Scorched* proposes a wider definition for the concept of justice that is rooted in love and memorialization, instead of the current system which Mouawad describes as "ruthless" (Mouawad, 2003, p. 4). Nawal's experiences from the age of fourteen to sixty are illustrated as a cycle of anger and redemption inside a family. Baring the burden of her children as the reminder of the torture and rape she endured, Nawal never discloses her secret with Janine and Simon, so as to keep the pain at minimum. Through her children's investigation of her past, Nawal obtains closure and finally manages to break the cycle of violence and anger that had been perpetual in her family throughout generations, even causing horrendous incest. Translating his suffering into theatre, Mouawad explains the theme of most of his plays: "More often than not, you have to integrate suffering into your life. Become it. And let it move you into another country, so that it can become something else" (Perloff & Richard; Mouawad, 2012, p. 8) *Scorched* become such a big success in setting up Mouawad's international career that his subsequent work met with the response, "Oh, your play is very nice, but it's not '*Incendies*'!" (Wren; Mouawad, 2015, p. 1).

Desiring to create a “politically neutral” film just like the source material was, Villeneuve regarded *Incendies* as “about peace, about ending the cycle of violence” (Villeneuve qtd in Douglas). Similar to the earlier notion of the doppelganger, the concept of repetition and cyclicity present in *Scorched* is one that reminiscent of the practice of adaptation, in that the concept of repetition calls for ‘a thing’ and its ‘reappearance’, just like the doppelganger’s ‘original’ and ‘copy’. This act of reappearance entails sameness and difference in itself which comes along with change. As Plato puts the emphasis on the ‘sameness’ aspect of repetition since there is an outside source which the repetition or ‘copies’ resemble; Deleuze, building on Nietzsche, accentuates ‘difference’ in relation to repetition, since he argues there is no outside source (Deleuze, 2004, p. 6). Deleuze’s opinion on the concept of repetition is akin to the practice of adaptation as he says, “There is no identity, and in repetition, nothing is ever the same. Rather, there is only differences: copies are something new, everything is constantly changing, and reality is a becoming, not a being” (Roffe, 2005, p. 1). Even theatre itself feeds off of other arts and techniques in developing unique movement and story on stage. Deleuze continues explaining repetition in film drawing from theatre: “Theatre is real movement, and it extracts real movement from all the arts it employs. This is what we are told: this movement, the essence and the interiority of movement, is not opposition, not mediation, but repetition.” (Deleuze, 2004, p. 10) In visual and literary arts, repetition is an indispensable basic element. Bordwell and Thompson claim their concept of repetition in film, which can be categorized as motif and parallelism, grounds itself on literature, much like everything else. Parallelism is the similarity of at least two scenes, whereas motifs are a repeating element in parallel scenes such as music, lighting, prop, etc. (Bordwell; Thompson, 2010, p. 11). With repetition, different aspects of a work of art melt into one another to form a unity, all the while still retaining their unique structures. As Lothe

asserts, “the structure of repetition is very common in cinematic narrative, because it operates there to underline significant story information” (Lothe, 2000, p. 239).

Since *Scorched* is a unique work of art with unusual narrative techniques and plot points and can be regarded as avant-garde for even theatre itself, adapting such a play into a cinematic format becomes quite challenging. As discussed in earlier chapters, cinema is an art industry that is very much reliant on money; hence, favour stories whose narrative structures already resemble a film and tend to go for less controversial subject matters with a higher chance of popularity. Considering this, *Scorched* is an unlikely candidate for adaptation, given its emotionally heavy topic, filled with outrageous events and an authentic theatrical framework, which is not surprising given Villeneuve’s general inclination towards such projects. Although he was not seeking for projects to adapt since his earlier films were all original scripts, Villeneuve describes his initial thoughts upon seeing the production:

I was totally astonished by the beauty and power of this very beautiful, very powerful story. It’s a very unique story and when I saw it in a theatre in Montreal, I knew right away that I would make a film out of it. It’s the way the author, Wajdi Mouwad was able to talk about the anger inside a family, inside a society. We put it in a kind of Greek tragedy mixed with a detective story. It is a fantastic play. The play is a masterpiece. I remember it lasted four hours and the audience was breathless. There was no more oxygen in the room. It was so moving. The room was filled with emotions. And I said, this would make a fantastic film. I’ve done everything in order to put that kind of emotion on the screen. (Villeneuve, 2011)

Although not his debut film, *Incendies* (2010) is the picture that placed Villeneuve in the international spotlight granting him an Academy Awards nomination in the Best

Foreign Language Film category in 2011. From Mouawad's incredibly personal and poetic creation, Villeneuve manages to build a slow-burn detective story, expanding the Greek tragedy aspect of the play by drawing from Sophocles' classic *Oedipus the King*. Since stage plays are seen as something to be watched and experienced, rather than read, *Incendies* was free from the criticisms of fidelity that were directed much more liberally at *Enemy* or *Arrival*, because people who had not seen the play did not read it either. However, the success of the film definitely reflected to the sales of the printed-version of *Scorched*. Annie Gibson, the Publisher of Toronto-based Playwrights Canada Press whose firm is responsible for the English translation of the play, says that there has been an increase in demand since the movie came out. "We don't have that kind of success with any of our books and especially not translations, so it's a testament to the quality of the play. It really is a phenomenal piece of work." (Wyatt; Gibson, 2011, p. 1)

Setting the film in an unnamed Middle Eastern country, Villeneuve follows some paths set forth by Mouawad while departing from some others. "That was the most beautiful artistic gift," says Villeneuve expressing his gratitude to Mouawad for not only trusting him with the rights to the play, but also for agreeing with any creative decision and departure made along the way: "I give you the right as long as the movie comes to you. I knew that no matter what [you] would do, the movie belongs to you, even if the movie is a total failure." (Villeneuve, 2011). Thankfully, Wajdi Mouawad was delighted with Villeneuve's re-imagining of *Incendies*:

The film *Incendies* is a complete work in its own right: it owes nothing to anyone and it rests entirely on Denis' talent as a filmmaker. It all belongs to him. It all comes down to him. And that is tremendous. (Wyatt; Mouawad, 2011, p. 1)

Similar to other works in his filmography, Villeneuve takes full authorship of *Incendies* from the writing process until the editing room. During the pre-production phase, the first challenging task of the adaptation process to overcome was writing the play into a working screenplay. Informed by Mouawad about his long writing process and how demanding it was, Villeneuve chose boldly not to transpose the story and took on the screenwriting himself, peeling off Mouawad's poetic language, yet keeping the structure and imagery. Admiring the play on stage and loving "cinema that's close to theater", Villeneuve was still aware of the fact that much alteration was needed to make the story work in front of the camera (Villeneuve, 2011). In order to achieve a narrative that can fit into a cinematic structure, he had to distance it away from theater. Not shying away from cutting entire scenes, characters and monologues, he remarks:

I kept the main characters and the same story, of course, but I did have to remove all the beautiful and powerful theatrical images that was on the stage because, as I said, they were very powerful and beautiful but so theatrical (Villeneuve, 2011)

Referring to the play as "a Bible for everyone" on the set, Villeneuve claims staying true to the balance set up by Mouawad. While *Scorched*'s strongest hold was Mouawad's poetic utilization of language, Villeneuve creates a story narrated more by visuals. The powerful cohesiveness of the film was a result of Villeneuve's careful adaptation operation of the play during the writing process. The screenplay had to be as precise as possible, because the budget of the film did not allow additional alterations or improvisations on set, meaning that the film had to be edited before it was shot. "The structure of *Incendies* is like a building skeleton," remarks Villeneuve, "the audience has to fill the holes" (Villeneuve, 2011)

Following the tradition, Villeneuve opens *Incendies* strikingly with an enigmatic sequence of scarred Arab boys gathered up, waiting in line for a buzz-cut from military men which is a scene that does not appear in *Scorched*. The sequence begins with a wide exterior shot of a barren landscape that is followed by an unhurried zoom-out unveiling a window-frame, hinting that this perspective is somebody's framed view. A room full of children who all seem afraid and hurt then cuts to a low angle of their bare feet as opposed to the military boots of the men. An extreme close-up of a boy's foot reveals a tattoo on his heel: a vertical line of three black dots. After lurking around in the room uncomfortably, the camera slowly dollies in on a boy being shaved, whose haunting eyes are fixated onto the lens, as if to be looking directly at you, accompanied with the song "You and Whose Army" (2001) by Radiohead. The song connects the very Middle-Eastern-looking scene to Canada, into the notary's office where Jeanne and Simon receive the igniting letters. Villeneuve comments on the choice of song:

[T]his idea came by the fact that I knew I would be an imposter, doing a movie about something I don't know, which is war in Middle East. The only way I can relate it to this story was by intimacy and family, but the context will be something that I don't know. It was just a kind of artistic statement to just say right at the beginning that what the audience will see is the view of a Westerner on the Middle East situation. (Villeneuve, 2011)

The choice of song in this scene and for the rest of the film reflects Villeneuve's positioning of himself as the author of the story. Through this subtle technique, one can presume the filmmaker's acknowledgment of his alienage to the delicate social subject of the film, as opposed to Mouawad, who was born and lived in Lebanon and experienced the civil war on first-hand. Believing that it is a bad idea to be directing something you are a stranger to, Villeneuve set the story in an unnamed country as well and chose to

inhabit the familiar perspective of a westerner through the twins' point of view who are also outsiders to the culture, saying that they became "the door to this story. They are my eyes." (Villeneuve, 2011) Despite being a foreigner to the culture, Villeneuve's talents as a filmmaker qualify him to adapt the play to the new format.

Besides signaling the director's alien status to the subject matter, the opening sequence also offers visual keys regarding the plot and the twist of *Incendies*. Those who are familiar with Mouawad's *Scorched* can easily guess by the accented close-up of the tattooed heel and the zoom-in to the boy's face that he is, in fact, Nawal's lost son, Nihad/Abou Tarek during the siege of Kfar Rayat orphanage. As with many other clues scattered throughout the film, Villeneuve expands the Oedipal air of the play as an "underlying vehicle for the film" starting with Nihad's tattoo, which is a direct reference to Oedipus' pierced ankles in Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*. (Mullen, 2012, p. 65) In the play, Nawal leaves her son with a clown nose wrapped in his bundle as a mark of recognition later. In the film, however, Nawal recognizes her son in a fashion resembling Sophocles' tragic hero. Marked by his parents right after his birth, Oedipus' pierced and swollen feet reveal his name – which literally translates to "swollen foot" in Greek – and his true identity. Similarly, Nawal's mother tattoos the baby's heel with three black dots, so that one day Nawal can distinguish her baby from other children. "It's a beautiful and powerful story that I relate to a Greek tragedy," says Villeneuve, "It's a modern story with sort of Greek tragedy element in it." (Villeneuve, 2011).

Villeneuve's careful placement of a summarizing prologue to *Incendies* lets him accomplish a dramatic shift of plot from the play. While *Scorched* focuses on the story of two siblings in search of their father and brother, *Incendies* narrates a story of "three children sacrificed to the laws of war." (Meerzon, 2013, p. 1). From a chronotopic standpoint, the opening sequence sets up the connection between the people and the

landscape, with the lack of speaking characters establishing the film's descriptive quality. Where "the play conjured snipers, assassinations and bloody rerisals entirely with dialogue," (Villeneuve, qtd Jenkins, 2011) Villeneuve opts for a minimalistic and authentic setting backing up the poetic atmosphere through his visuals, an example being his desicion to shoot the film in Jordan. Based mostly on natural lighting, *Incendies* builds contrast in his cinematic narrative with the horrendous story unfolding on the background of a stunning landscape supported with thematic montage as a cinematic expression of Mouawad's dramatic language. Preserving the section by section structure of the play which had scenes and acts, Villeneuve divides *Incendies* into chapters as well, with title cards hinting the content of the upcoming section. Although title cards and sectioning off stories are not specific to theatre – for silent films of the earlier ages, or even contemporary filmmakers such as Tarantino employ title cards quite often – Villeneuve's utilization of the title cards divide the film into acts, each of them bearing the titles of the scenes and acts from *Scorched*.

The director successfully maintains the dual narrative of *Scorched* in the film which provides an innovative dramatic structure between generations without the obligation of a flashback. He claims it is "a dialogue between two periods of time and two quests – the mother's quest and daughter's quest" (Villeneuve, 2011). The film accomplishes in creating this dual narrative without losing the insightful look into Nawal's personal journey. Sharing opinions with Mouawad on repetition and simultaneity, Villeneuve explains:

I don't like flashbacks in cinema. I think that the past has to live in the present. I don't like going into the past to explain something in the present. What I love about *Incendies*' dramatic structure, it was like this in the play. ***Two presents from different times and there is dialogue between these two presents.*** That I love. It

was like this in the play, but also really different. I had to make a huge adaptation difference to turn the story into cinema. (Villeneuve, 2011; emphasis added)

Instead of having Nawal or Jeanne as the central character, the film watches both journeys simultaneously creating a visible bond between the mother and the daughter, with matching transitions. Apparent from the given quotation above, the filmmaker successfully manages to deploy the simultaneity aspect into cinematic language. Denis Villeneuve is an artist who successfully demonstrates how an adaptation is not only dependent upon the differences between two mediums and the transposition process, but also on the artist's vision and attachment to the project.

After the dream-like prologue, whose meaning becomes clear by the revelation of the film, *Incendies* follows a similar course of action to the play. Although slow-paced, Villeneuve manages to fill *Incendies* with gripping details that can escape in the blink of an eye. As in Villeneuve fashion, the director goes for what he knows best besides the opening sequence. The film narrates the story of Jeanne and Simon Marwan who are assigned by their deceased mother Nawal in her final testament to uncover her mysterious past, in the first proper scene of the film in the notary Jean Lebel's office. The igniting letters that reveal the identity of the brother/father and inform him of the truths of his own life are mere motives, or rather "MacGuffis" to set the story forward. The task of delivering letters to their unknown father and brother leads them to their motherland of an unnamed country, unveiling to them the unavoidable tragic truth in the backdrop of a war-ravaged country.

Admitting his alien status to the subject matter and striving to achieve a sense of loyalty to the "essence" of the source material, Villeneuve still seeks out independency and authenticity in a mythical story in his artwork through what he knows best. Just as

Mouawad builds his play on never-ending monologues and temporal/spatial simultaneity on stage to create a juxtaposition of characters, Villeneuve employs techniques more exclusive to cinema, such as the double exposure of sounds when “the woman who sings,” Nawal, starts humming in the prison to a background of a woman screaming in pain which is linked to a montage of a rainy Montreal through another Radiohead song “Like Spinning Plates” (2001); or, for example, through continuous editing and sound bridging when shooting the exact same mountain road twice in order to form a link between the mother, Nawal who is on her tragic journey in search for her son and freedom, and the daughter, Jeanne, on the same road searching for the truth. By making the characters follow the exact path on their individual adventures and utilizing matching framing and scene transitions supported with sound and music, the filmmaker successfully alters the meaning attributed to that visual each time creating a thematic layering.

A great example of this is the pivotal scene surrounding the bus massacre, which marks a powerful moment in the play but as a mere subjective monologue by Nawal to Sawda; yet, is a gut-wrenching, character-defining scene of a literal attack in the film. While walking along the highway, Nawal spots a bus coming her way. Before hailing and getting on the bus, Nawal makes sure to wrap her head with a scarf as well as the cross around her neck. After a while, a group of militia men stops the bus and opens fire, massacring every passenger except for Nawal and a pair of mother-daughter. Unlike the more secular approach *Scorched* takes, Nawal saves herself from the Christian militia by showing the cross around her neck and attempts to save the little girl by claiming she is her daughter, which again is a departure from the source material. The militia men do not buy into it and shoot the little girl alongside her mother while Nawal falls down on her

knees with the sound. As the bus burns in flames in the background, Nawal remains on her knees, “fixed in place, silenced and scorched” (Mullen, 2012, p. 60).

Villeneuve cuts to a shot of Jeanne on a bus listening to music, wearing an outfit matching her mother's in the earlier scene completed with a cross on her neck, forming a visual bond between the two women of distinct contexts. Seated in a very similar manner to her mother, Janine is listening to the song “You and Whose Army” by Radiohead, which marks the second appearance of the song in the film. It is a multilayered moment. Villeneuve strips the scene naked from its dialogue heavy disposition and designs a visually striking sequence of a traumatic event with long shots and extreme close-ups accompanied by quick editing and matching scene transitions between time periods, which is not a rarity in the general duration of the film. Whereas the filmmaker lets the audience associate the road and the bus with death and terror with the sequence involving Nawal, as Jeanne takes the scene over the meaning completely changes to a curious investigation into history of a family and a country. This clever editing facilitates the display of both the distance and the proximity between Nawal and Jeanne. Through repetition of the setting, the costumes and even songs, Villeneuve manages to bring binary meanings together, as well as bringing the film both closer and further away from the play. Deleuze promotes Villeneuve's handling of repetition in a story involving travel and investigation by saying films being driven by,

...characters, caught in certain pure optical and sound situations, [who] find themselves condemned to wander about or go off on a trip'... Such characters 'no longer exist in the interval of movement', rather, a 'reversal is produced: movement is no longer simply aberrant, aberration is now valid in itself and designates time as its direct cause (Deleuze, 1989, p. 216).

It is important to highlight, at this moment, the brilliant casting of the two female leads with Lubna Azabal as Nawal Marwan and Mélissa Desormeaux-Poulin as Jeanne since the two actresses resemble each other, not only in looks but also in their mannerisms. This renders the repetitive nature of the plot and visuals, alongside the simultaneous and alternating narrative structure of past and present that much more complex and authentic. The core cast Lubna Azabal, Mélissa Désormeaux – Poulin, and Maxim Gaudette who are Nawal, Jeanne and Simon respectively, fit perfectly to their characters and perform remarkably; especially Azabal portraying Nawal's inner struggles and endured hardships is very impressive. Villeneuve cleverly opted for a supporting cast that were mostly non-actor Iraqi refugees from Jordan, which definitely contributed to the authenticity of the film.

Apparent from the bus massacre sequence, Villeneuve employs violence in his work not as a shock but for the sake of catharsis and storytelling, abstaining from unnecessary images of gore. Given the grim subject matter of the story, *Incendies* is notably understated. Except for three particular scenes of Wahab's murder, the bus massacre and a sniper shooting, violent scenes are generally hinted at through extreme close-ups, silence, tears, and visual metaphors rather than melodramatic shots or emotional outbursts. Villeneuve explains:

The story is very violent. I removed a lot of the violence in the adaptation to the film. Because, from an emotional point of view, I think cinema is ten times more powerful than theatre. For ideas, I think they are the same. But for emotion, cinema goes to some territories that are a little dangerous. That's why I removed a lot of the violence. The bus scene is violent enough to understand why the character would change her view of the World. (Villeneuve, 2011)

Neither in the scenes involving murder, nor in Nawal's rape scene does Villeneuve explicitly show violence on screen; rather, he depicts a snippet of a shot with off-screen sounds implying the actions. Even Simon, who is very foul-mouthed in *Scorched*, is toned down in the film. Since his supporting and extras consist mostly of non-actor refugees from the region, Villeneuve remarks feeling "a huge responsibility to film those war scenes in front of people who had been in a war a few months ago" (qtd Jenkins, 2011).

Thomas Cardwell's comments on the film describe how it:

... successfully explores the residual effect of past trauma on contemporary lives.

As one character comments, 'Death is never the end of the story. It leaves traces.'

There are several moments in the film when Jeanne is warned about finding out too much and she even experiences prejudices that are still being kept alive as a result of her mother's legacy. Ultimately the case is made for the need to reconcile with the past even if the process is painful and *Incendies* effectively argues that this is necessary so that contemporary generations can break the cycle of violence that has plagued their predecessors. (Cardwell, 2011, p. 1)

Just like Mouawad's story, Nawal's fruitless quest and her later involvement with the resistance in assassinating the militia commander, leads her to the prison where she unknowingly reconciles with her son, Nihad, under his novice name Abou Tarek. Upon her defiance as "the woman who sings" Nawal is faced with torture and rape at the hands of her son which results in his incestuous pregnancy of the twins, Jeanne and Simon. The information of her mother's crimes and imprisonment which is followed by her rape and pregnancy is obtained by Jeanne at an earlier point in the film. Right after then, the film narrates Nihad's portion of the story in which he went through phases of first seeking out his mother and then going corrupt which leads him to take the name Abou Tarek. The shocking Oedipal climax is broken to her and Simon by the end of the film revealing that

About Tarek the rapist father is also their lost elder brother. However, Nawal's discovery of her son's identity and the ending of the film differs from that of *Scorched*.

The tri-spotted tattoo and the clown nose have a pivotal part in both narratives since each accentuates the dramatic effect of the Oedipal tragedy. In *Scorched*, the revelation ensues during Nihad's testimony at a trial for his war crimes. He exclaims:

This trial has been such a bore! No beat, no sense of showbiz. That's where I find my dignity. And always have. I was born with it. The people who watched me grow up always said this object was a sign of my origins, of my dignity, since, according to the story they tell, it was given to me by my mother. A little red nose. A little clown nose. What does it mean? My personal dignity is a funny face left by the woman who gave birth to me. This funny face has never left me. So let me wear it now and sing one of my songs, to save dignity from the horror of boredom.

(Mouawad, 2003, p. 140)

Predictably, Villeneuve uncovers the twist through visuals rather than words. In *Incendies*, the revelation occurs at a Montreal swimming pool where Nawal takes a break from swimming at the edge of the pool and notices a tri-spotted tattoo on the heel of a man standing in front of her. After going up to confront him, Nawal instantly goes mute as a result of emotional turbulence of the discovery. The revelation of *Incendies* is embedded in the narrative from the prologue on. Like the approach of the rest of the film, Villeneuve reveals the tragedy through the Oedipal tattoo which strengthens the mythical spirit of the film instead of a trial which can be linked to the political atmosphere of a civil war.

What is unique about *Incendies* is how it meddles with the viewer's expectations of horror and accusation because of the manner in which Villeneuve handles audience's

narrative instincts. In the final moments of the film, Jeanne and Simon fulfill their mother's wishes and deliver the letters to Nihad. The disclosure shocks Nihad as one letter addressed to the son professes his mother's love fulfilling Nawal's promise of finding and loving her son continuously; while the other, addressed to the father forgives his horrendous actions as a defiant act of breaking the cycle of anger and hurt present inside the family. This act of forgiveness distinguishes Nawal from Sophocles' mother figure of Jocasta, who opts for killing herself after learning about the tragic truth. She chooses to bear the burden of guilt and hurt alone, whereas Nawal granted herself a closure through forgiveness after years of suffering in solitude without disclosing the secret to anyone. Even Nihad is given an opportunity of reconciliation where he gets to visit his mother's grave at the final shot of the film, as opposed to Oedipus' fate (Williams, 2012, p .1).

Closely resembling the plot of Oedipus, *Incendies* progresses smoothly, with each revelation tightening the rope around the audience's throat until the inevitable explosion of discovery. The occurrence of a tragedy renders the person in an uncommon emotional situation. Both versions embrace the obligation for a process of revelations in order to reach that uncomfortable catharsis, as declared by Nawal in her letter to the twins in *Scorched*: "There are truths that can only be revealed on condition of having been discovered." (Mouawad, 2003, p. 16).

Standing proudly as a unique example of how a theatre play can be adapted authentically and artistically, Villeneuve once again breaks genre conventions and discourse expectations, while still staying connected to the literary source material. Challenging the concept of originality and copy, Villeneuve raises questions regarding art and life. To conclude with Mouawad's words on the film displaying how theatre adaptations are depicted and perceived: "The film *Incendies* that Denis has made from the

play *Incendies* is the work of an outstanding artist. (...) In that context, it cannot be considered an adaptation of the play: to define it that way would be to diminish it and that would be unfair” (Wyatt, 2011; Mouawad, 2011 p. 1) Clearly, Mouawad needs to do a lot more reading on adaptations.



6. CONCLUSION

“It is about freedom and identity. As long as I will be able to do my own projects and that I am making cinema that has root inside my soul” - Denis Villeneuve

The aim of this thesis was to explore the concept of film adaptation of three different genres - short story, novel and play – by the same artist Denis Villeneuve through the tropes of time, the double and repetition, all of which are intrinsically linked with adaptation as a notion. Denis Villeneuve is an artist with a strong vision and a unique cinematic language who has mastered the art of adaptation over the years via tackling different genres successfully each time. An expert of control, Villeneuve creates mystery with an already established narrative line, fabricating a sense of intimacy and authenticity as if to claim full ownership of the source material. In his words:

“Filmmaking for me is all about the notion of point of view. I think the most important thing in cinema is suggest and not to show” (Villeneuve, 2010). Blending the known with the unknown, the filmmaker uses certain trademarks to bring a written story to life with enigmatic opening sequences, non-linear narrative structure, extreme close-up, silence-heavy sound design and ominous music utilization. Just like his characters, Villeneuve renders the audience a seeker of the truth in a seemingly clear world yet blinded by inevitable biases. There is a cyclical nature in the films of Villeneuve, even if that is not the case in the source material. The answers to all questions asked inside the narrative are often revealed to the spectator at the beginning of the film. Only at the end of the journey does the viewer realize that they come full circle.

What is special of Villeneuve’s adaptations is how masterfully they shatter the constraints of the “tiresome” discussion of fidelity haunting the discourse by claiming that “the task of adaptation is the reproduction in cinema of something essential about an

original text (Andrew, 1984). Cinematic adaptations of any genre, though varying in execution, can achieve a lot more than just being loyal to their source material. The significance of an adaptation arises from the interpretation and inspiration in the birth of a new work of art. In Cosetti's words:

Both literature and cinema have been regarded, essentially, as **modes of expression**, sites and ways of manifestation of an ability to give shape to ideas, feelings and personal orientations; in other words, as sites in which an individual's perception are combined with the person's will/necessity to offer an image of him or herself and of his or her world. As a consequence, many of these contributions employ, as their key concepts, notions such as 'work', 'author', 'poetics' and 'intention'. These notions focus on the presence of an individual's work and simultaneously, on the fact that a text testifies to it; they emphasize the unfolding of personal actions and a personal universe, and the additional idea of being the repository of the text's deepest identity. (Cosetti, 2004)

From its invention, cinema has formed a unique bond with time. As opposed to literature, which provides the sense of time through tenses, cinema recorded life frames per second, resulting in "an uncanny spatial and temporal duplicate of the world." (Holoquist, 2002) Similarly to the physical reality, time and space are intrinsically connected in fiction as well, since chronology cannot be isolated from events in a narrative. As Michael Holoquist remarks, "An event is always dialogic unit in so far as it is a co-relation: something happens only when something else with which it can be compared reveals a change in time and space (...)" (Holoquist, 2002). Martin Flanagan reinforces that, by explaining the central role of chronotope: "without chronotopes there would presumably be no narrative." (Flanagan, 2009) Though Bakhtin's concept focuses on literature instead of cinema, chronotope has proven to be particularly useful for films. As Robert Stam

claims, film is inherently “multichronotopic”, as it “concretely crosses a screen with specific dimensions and unfolding in literal time” (Stam, 2003)

Exploring the concept of time and chronotope in *Arrival* in the first chapter, Villeneuve expands the short story by Ted Chiang into a captivating feature-length film, with the support of his screenwriter Eric Heisserer; interestingly, he manages not to stretch the story thin. Utilizing the complex use of language that brilliantly indicates time in *Story of Your Life*, Villeneuve opts for the cinematic technique of editing to achieve such an effect. Instead of adding sub-plots and irrelevant information that distracts from the theme, the filmmaker treasures every second, visualising the impossible. Creating a false sense of flashbacks throughout the film, Villeneuve tricks the audience into seeking answers to wrong questions. Through its humane theme, *Arrival* becomes larger than a mere sci-fi and converts into a profoundly humane story with an intellectual twist. Villeneuve becomes a wizard warping the sense of time both inside the narrative and inside the theatre. Fittingly, he comments, “**Artists are supposed to be people that are trying to see into future. Trying to read into society. And read human behaviours. To digest the past.**” (Villeneuve, 2016)

The second chapter centers on Villeneuve’s *Enemy*, the adaptation of the acclaimed author Jose Saramago’s novel *The Double*, by analyzing the most conventional source for adaptations from the perspective of the doppelganger. The doppelganger is frequently encountered in literature for its aptitude as a device for externalising human conflicts of chronic duality and incompleteness, in a stark contrast to the previously accepted idea of unity. Logical thinking assumes that “the existence of absolute doubles” means “one of us has to be a mistake” (Saramago, 2002). The occurrence and experience of a double was theorized by Freud on his studies of the stranger. As opposed to what is familiar, the double as a subcategory of the stranger awakens feelings of fear and unease.

According to Freud, the double is a defence mechanism of the ego against its own destruction, thus becoming an extension of the self. The doppelganger motif does not only depict the manifestation of a destabilized identity, it also “reveals the very repetition that founds subjectivity” (?). The doppelganger’s sense of unease and fear of usurping of agency in the self, recalls the relationship between the source novel and its film adaptation.

What sets *The Double* apart is the way it contrasts the qualities attributed to the trope and twists them paradoxically, indulging in the tradition historically, narratively and theoretically in a postmodern sense (Marciniak, 2007). Originality is a concept that is prevalent throughout the narrative by both of the doubles questioning their legitimacy. Similarly, Villeneuve stirs up questions regarding the traditional approach to adaptation with his radical reimagining of the novel in his *Enemy*. Despite the complex characters and gripping plot, the narrative style and the heavy subject matter undermine the novel’s adaptation qualities. Carrying over the plotline and theme of the novel, Villeneuve’s lens enlarges what Saramago put forward and blends it with his authentic vision. Adding the symbol of spiders haunting the film from start to finish, Villeneuve fashions a multilayered narrative from an already impressive story, focusing on the protagonists’ relationship with the women in his life. Akin to *Arrival*, the filmmaker creates a false sense of time through the double motif where the spectator is not aware of when and who it is that she is watching. Villeneuve has saturated the film with a dripping sense of danger and dread haunting each frame, the sum of all which results in a gripping psychosexual thriller.

The final chapter focusing on Villeneuve’s first adaptation work is the film version of Wajdi Mouawad’s praised play *Incendies/Scorched* via the concept of repetition and cyclicity that is prevalent in the story. Just like the chronotope and the

doppelganger, repetition is another concept fitting to the practice of adaptation. In his book *Fiction and Repetition* (1982), J. Hillis Miller discusses the repetition concept mainly within the novel genre (which can be applied to drama as well), claiming that: “In a novel, what is said two or more times may not be true, but the reader is fairly safe in assuming that it is significant” (Miller, 1982). Thus, the notion of repetition in narratives implies the occurrence of an already told story to serve a particular function, however not in its entirety, for some aspects might have evolved, but with the core idea remaining intact and repeated (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). Repetition, in this respect, can be likened to adaptation, as a concept for the story seemingly repeats itself in another medium. Whether deliberate or not, when stories are retold, they serve specific function altering the meaning behind the previous version (Polster, 1987). Thus, the first narrative and its repetition are both identical and different at the same time: “the fabula elements are the same, but the meaning has changed” (Sullivan, 2017 & Bal, 2009). The situated context as a vital aspect of narrative repetition, affects the meaning even though the story might stay the same to the point.

Since the central literary genre of the chapter is theatre, the area covered by plays in the adaptation discourse is analyzed. Mostly overlooked, stage-to-film adaptations actually constitute a large portion of all film adaptations. Because of the apparent visual and structural similarities between the two artforms, it is easy to assume that the process of adapting a play into film is smooth-sailing since a play is acted out “just like a film”, anyway. However, there are sharp differences in execution of both, and the adaptation process requires a distinct approach. Film adaptations of theatre plays require a sharp transition from verbal to visual medium; the textual content is reduced in terms of amount and expressiveness which then get replaced by visual expressions. Following the first two chapters, *Incendies* is analyzed in the light of its predecessor with a contextual

analysis including form and content. *Scorched* simultaneously tells two intertwining storylines moving back and forth over fifty years, sometimes capturing two distinct time frames on the stage at the same time, by employing theatrical techniques of mise en abyme, repetition and simultaneity. The play stands out as a theatre work as a result of its structural complexity and its central motif of identity which is traced through a matriarchal line. *Scorched* is a foreign story, even to its adaptor. From Mouawad's incredibly personal and poetic creation, Villeneuve manages to build a slow-burn detective story, expanding the Greek Tragedy aspect of the play by drawing from Sophocles' classic *Oedipus the King*. Employing techniques specific to cinema in order to narrate the story in its authentic repetitive nature and on-stage simultaneity, Villeneuve uses editing and sound design. *Incendies* builds contrast in his cinematic narrative with the horrendous story unfolding on the background of a stunning landscape supported with thematic montage as a cinematic expression of Mouawad's dramatic language.

It is difficult not to see the thematic connection between *Enemy*, *Arrival* and *Incendies*.. Although each one is unique in their source material, film genre, and execution, their being a product of the same artist renders them a unifying bond through technical employment and thematic commonality. Similar to the first two works which display unconventional, non-linear narrative lines, *Incendies* messes with the perception of time through cycles -just like *Arrival*-, repetition – like that of *Enemy*- and simultaneity. Frequently employing intercuts – whether it be flashback/flashforwards present in the first chapter, or real/fiction in the second -, the filmmaker cuts between past and present creating a sense of simultaneity and strengthening his overarching theme of cyclicity. To conclude, adaptations open up conversations on alterations regarding the society, cultural opinions and human self-perception. Each artist brings something new to the table and each genre opens up vast opportunities. It is important to let go of biased

and old-fashioned approaches to art in order to open up novice discussions in the discourse. As Villeneuve himself remarks on challenging different genres, “Sometimes it creates an equilibrium. I am exploring one side of cinema. It allows me to be free and to do something totally different after. It is almost like walking. Left, then right.”

(Villeneuve, 2016)



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