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UNWRITINGS, UNSCREENINGS:

GENDER IN CONTEMPORARY ADAPTATION PRACTICE

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Unwritings, Unscreenings: Gender in Contemporary Adaptation Practice

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In my dissertation, I advance the understanding of film adaptation in the context of comparative new media studies, taking part in the current debate on adaptation that has begun to reconceptualize the role of what had previously been conceived of as the source novel and its relationship with the supposedly "derivative" film adaptation. I argue that adaptation as an intermedial configuration has the potential to reflect on technologies and representational practices in and across media, revealing adaptation's potential to illuminate how media technologies shape our knowledge and experience. I suggest that it is due to their comparative potential that adaptations are able to contribute to the self-reflexive perspectives that these literary texts already convey to readers when considered alone. Film adaptations can respond to reflections on writing in literature by reflecting on their own cinematic medium, often incorporating additional technologies such as digital screens and networks. I discuss both adaptation from literature to film and adaptation in terms of the impact of digital media on cinema, suggesting that literature and film, as well as the question of adaptation, have to be reconsidered through new media paradigms.

To show adaptation's potential to develop critical perspectives on media technologies and their discursive impact, the dissertation focuses on the topic of gender relations. The methodological endeavor of the dissertation lies in reframing adaptation studies within the larger context of cutting-edge comparative media theory that responds to the digital revolution, while integrating the study of adaptation with gender-oriented media studies in order to arrive at a timely theoretical framework focused on subjectivity.

The cases of adaptation that I discuss reveal adaptation's potential to address how media technologies and storytelling shape gender binaries. I examine *Malina*, Austrian writer Ingeborg Bachmann's feminist cult novel from 1971, and its eponymous film adaptation, directed by Werner Schroeter in 1991. I then analyze correspondences between Franz Kafka's *The Trial* from 1921 and David Lynch's latest feature film, the digital video production *Inland Empire* from 2006, which I read as an unofficial adaptation of Kafka's text with a female protagonist in the digital age. The literary texts that I discuss violate representational conventions in order to deal critically with gender binaries in representation. In Kafka, Bachmann, Schroeter, and Lynch, the conventions for depicting and constructing "man" and "woman" as specific roles are criticized not only by the different stories but by the ways in which the texts and films break with the very practice of traditional plot-driven storytelling.

My close readings of the literary texts center on their meta-narrative poetics and their rearticulation of gender binaries. From this perspective, I revisit the films, showing how these respond to the texts with a negotiation of their own medium of cinema as it relates to both literature and digital media. I reveal instances in the texts and films that

blur diegetic boundaries concomitantly with gender binaries in the course of a negotiation of their own medium. I show that Ingeborg Bachmann's and Werner Schroeter's *Malina*, reconsidered as an intermedial constellation, turns adaptation into a practice that amplifies self-reflexive poetics. My discussion of Kafka and Lynch shows how, through adaptation, a modern alienation from mythical traditions is adopted from the perspective of contemporary media innovation. Through these readings, I show adaptation's potential to initiate a dialogue between literature, cinema, and digital networks, whereby texts are "digitized" into networks that foreshadow interfaces with which the reader/viewer can interact in ways that transcend gender binaries.

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1 Introduction

1.1 From Vienna to Hollywood to Cyberspace

Adaptations have a long history, ranging from Roman adaptations of Greek plays to 3-D blockbusters based on comics. Yet adaptation, in particular in cinema, has long remained at the margins of scholarship. Responses to film adaptations of canonical literary works often show an assumed superiority of literature over the medium of cinema, and "the-book-was-better" attitude is still prevalent among many general viewers.

During the last two decades, however, the field of adaptation studies has become more vibrant. Scholars who are fluent in both cinema and literature studies, including Robert Stam and Robert B. Ray, drive these new theoretically oriented debates. Recent reconsiderations of adaptation have begun reconceptualizing the role of what had previously been conceived of as the source novel and its relationship with the supposedly "derivative" film adaptation. Instead of considering an adaptation to be a copy that needs to be "faithful" to the literary predecessor, recent contributions have criticized this expectation of fidelity. In this view, adaptation is considered a dialogical process, meaning that adaptations can respond to and comment on the adapted text. Adaptations thereby are able to provide their own "readings" of their literary source—or sources.

However, these current debates on adaptation still suffer from a blind spot on which I shed light: their neglect of media-specific aesthetics and technologies. Technological differences between literature and film are primarily discussed in terms of the obstacles they pose when transferring narrative units—characters, events, milieu—from one medium to another. My research, however, aims at advancing our understanding of adaptation by further exploring the significance of media technologies to the dialogical relation between adapted text and film. I reveal adaptation's potential to reflect on how media technologies shape our knowledge and experience. To be more precise: I argue that adaptation involves texts, films, and other media in an intermedial constellation with significant critical potential: readers and viewers encounter various versions of a work and are thereby challenged to reflect on aesthetic and technological differences between the media involved—meaning that they make comparisons beyond the events and characters in texts and films.

Furthermore, I suggest that it is due to their comparative and critical potential that adaptations are able to contribute to the self-reflexive perspectives that these literary texts already convey to readers when considered on their own. I thus take issue with the common idea that film adaptations are unable to do justice to complex literary texts. Rather, I analyze how film adaptations can respond to reflections on writing in literature by reflecting on their own cinematic medium, often involving additional media technologies such as digital screens and networks.

To show adaptation's potential to develop critical perspectives on media technologies and their discursive impact, I focus on the topic of gender relations. The field of gender studies explores binary ideas of masculinity and femininity as discursive effects. In this context, it is an established idea that media technologies, along with the images and stories that they produce, shape our concepts of gender identity and difference. In literature, reflections on the relationship between gender and literary discourse have been first and foremost delivered by women writers. Often writing from a position outside the canon, many contended that those literary forms established in intellectual discourse did not allow for expressing a female voice that had been previously excluded from this discourse. Regarding cinema, feminist film theorists analyzed gender binaries in spectatorship and audio-visual representation, identifying a tendency in 20th-century Hollywood cinema to present women as spectacle for a heterosexual male gaze that implies a spectator who identifies with both the gaze and agency of male protagonists. Cinema's mainstreamed audio-visual language was seen as creating subject-object binaries in spectatorship. It charged these with stereotypical binary ideas of female passivity and male activity, participating in a long-standing tradition in storytelling across media: many plot trajectories center on a male hero and his journey, attributed with a heterosexual desire and ambition, while women appear to be less as subject but rather as obstacle/temptation or as the hero's reward towards the end. Such practices construct an iconic "Woman" as opposed to a plurality of "women." Moreover, stereotypical masculinity and heterosexual desire are attributed to (what is discursively framed as) the male body.

The cases of adaptation that I discuss show adaptation's potential to address how media technologies shape gender binaries. In particular, I discuss adaptation from literature to film, as well as adaptation in terms of an impact of digital media in cinema. In my dissertation, I examine *Malina*, Austrian writer Ingeborg Bachmann's feminist cult novel from 1971, and its eponymous film adaptation, directed by Werner Schroeter in

1991. I then analyze correspondences between Franz Kafka's *The Trial* from 1921 and David Lynch's latest feature film, the digital video production *Inland Empire* from 2006, which I read as an unofficial adaptation of Kafka's text with a female protagonist in the digital age. The literary texts that I discuss violate representational conventions in order to deal critically with gender binaries in representation. Through close readings, I reveal how the films are able to respond to the texts through a negotiation of their own medium.

Moreover, I suggest that literature and film, as well as the question of adaptation, have to be reconsidered through new media paradigms. Recent discussions surrounding digital media have developed comparative perspectives on various media, re-evaluating literature's and cinema's place in contemporary communication. Digital screens with their fragmented nature and interactivity strongly contrast with the cinematic screen. In the 21st century, we do not necessarily go to the movies anymore. Rather, we stream many of the films that we watch on our computer screens. As interactive interfaces, digital screens allow us to pause and rewind films, interfering with the temporal flow of these artifacts. Multiple windows divide our attention between stars, spectacles, and our email inbox. Digital screens now mediate most of our communication, superceding cinema's status as the dominant mass medium of the past century.

My integration of adaptation studies, new media studies, and gender studies highlights the following: if gender binaries are shaped by representation in media, and adaptation bears the potential to foreground media and their conventions through comparison, then adaptation is able to shed light on media's involvement in gender construction. If both narrative literature and cinema are influential forces in the ongoing construction of gender binaries, then it might matter that the digital age has changed these media's place in contemporary communication: we might find ourselves in an advantageous historic position when it comes to re-evaluating the media traditions surrounding the static screens of movie theaters and paper pages—in general, and in relation to gender.

In my inquiry into the critical potential of adaptation, gender binaries across media form my focal point. I will discuss literary texts and cinematic adaptations that deal critically with the representation of gender binaries, whereby I seek to show how adaptation is able to contribute to the texts' reflections on their means of expression. To be more precise, in the material that I discuss, conventions of depicting and constructing "man" and "woman" as specific roles within stories are not only criticized by different stories, but by the ways in which the texts and films break with the very practice of traditional plot-driven storytelling. Of particular interest to my readings will be instances in the texts and films that blur diegetic boundaries concomitantly with those of gender binaries.

The dissertation furthermore takes issue with two blind spots in current debates on adaptation. The first one is the lack of discussion on gender in adaptation that is grounded in an understanding of gender as simultaneously represented and constructed in and across media. The second blind spot on which I seek to shed light is a subterranean shared ground of recent adaptation studies and new comparative debates surrounding digital media. The methodological endeavor of the dissertation therefore lies in reframing adaptation studies within the larger context of cutting-edge comparative media theory that accounts for the digital revolution, while integrating the study of adaptation with gender-oriented media studies in order to come to a timely theoretical framework focused on subjectivity.

1.2 New Adaptation Studies

Recently, the field of adaptation studies has become more vibrant than ever. During the last decade, a theoretically oriented debate on adaptation has reconceptualized the role of what has previously been conceived as the "source novel" or "original" in its relationship with the film adaptation as "derivative" or "copy": in particularly, the field has moved away from expectations of "fidelity" of the adaptation toward the literary text as an attempt to stay "true" to the "original," instead debating adaptation as a process in terms of a dialog between text and film that forms a practice in its own right. There has been a wave of publications in the form of essay collections since the mid-2000s. Since 2008, Oxford University Press dedicates a journal to the field, which is published under the title *Adaptation* by the likewise recently renamed British Association for Adaptation Studies —formerly known as the Association of Literature on Screen (implying literature's anteriority and hence superiority).

This "near-paradigm shift" is a development of the last decades, and responds to a predominantly judgmental critical attitude toward adaptation in the 20th century (Cartmell and Whelehan 8-9). Although film adaptations of literary works form a high percentage of the films made (Stam "Theory and Practice of Adaptation" 25), their study had remained a peripheral field (Ray 38, Naremore 15). Adaptations were often despised as inferior to literary works: in an emphasis on what has been lost in the process, adaptations were considered as usurping literary masterpieces (Cartmell and Whelehan 2-3, Stam, "Theory and Practice of Adaptation" 4).

Robert Stam identified various reasons for this disapproval of adaptation in his introduction to *Literature and Film: A Guide to the Theory and Practice of Film Adaptation.* Published in 2005, the book is one of two volumes with which Robert Stam and Alessandra Raengo intervene in the field, while Stam has published an additional monograph on adaptation shortly thereafter. The introductory essay "The Theory and Practice of Adaptation" criticized the aesthetic prioritizing of literature, the assumption that there is a rivalry between literature and film, the prejudice against the immediacy of the visual image, and the 'myth of the facility' of producing and watching films (Cartmell and Whelehan 3).

Stam has become one of the most influential voices who criticized "fidelity discourse" (Cartmell and Whelehan 15). According to him, the dismissal of adaptation is mainly motivated by disappointed expectations in terms of a moralistic and judgmental ideal of "fidelity" of adaptations towards their "source." Criticism of adaptations often gives expression to the sense that the film adaptation fails to capture features that are considered to be essential to its literary source ("Beyond Fidelity" 54-55, 57-58, Cartmell and Whelehan 14). Thereby adaptation discourse has generally re-inscribed the iconoclastic idea of the superiority of literature to film and the deficiency of film adaptations relative to their literary source texts ("Beyond Fidelity" 58).

In order to dismantle fidelity discourse's engagement with ideas of "original" and "copy," Robert B. Ray's article "The Field of 'Film and Literature'" refers to Jacques Derrida: objections against adaptation often rest on a hierarchy or opposition of "original" and "copy" that Derrida has repeatedly deconstructed. Instead, suggests Ray, film adaptation is a form of citation that refunctions volatile signs within a new context (45).

Stam argues that expectations of fidelity ignore media specificity, while fidelity actually is neither possible nor desirable ("Theory and Practice of Adaptation" 17-18). What is considered to be the "essence" of a text actually depends on critical consensus, since literary texts allow for manifold readings; therefore, their meaning cannot be stabilized in terms of a "core" or "essence" (15). Moreover, the process of filmmaking is more affected by questions of budget than the process of literary writing, affecting what scenes can be filmed (16). More importantly, Stam discusses media specificity in terms of the tracks involved in the media film and literature respectively: adaptation from text to film is a shift from a single-track medium, in which everything is recounted in an act of language, to the multi-track medium of film, which does not only involve words, but also music, sound effects, and moving images. Instead of emphasizing loss, Stam suggests that cinematic adaptation effects a multiplication of registers and resources (20).

As a new trope for adaptation outside the discourse of fidelity, I will draw on Stam's notion of the dialogics of adaptation. Although this notion becomes rather secondary in his seminal introduction to *Literature and Film* from 2005, Stam advocates the trope of the dialog in the introductory essay “Beyond Fidelity: The Dialogics of Adaptation,” published in James Naremore’s essay collection *Film Adaptation* (2000):

> An adaptation . . . is less an attempted resuscitation of an originary word that a turn in an ongoing dialogical process. The concept of intertextual dialogism suggests that every text forms an intersection of textual surfaces. All texts are tissues of anonymous formulae, variations on those formulae, conscious and unconscious quotations, and conflations and inversions of other texts. In the broadest sense, intertextual dialogism refers to the infinite and open-ended possibilities generated by all the discursive practices of a culture, the entire matrix of communicative utterances within which the artistic text is situated, which reach the text not only through recognizable influences, but also through a subtle process of dissemination. (“Beyond Fidelity” 64)

Stam here contextualizes adaptation from text to film within broader concepts of intertextuality. The advantage of this perspective lies in the fact that adaptation study transcends fidelity discourse, turning away from any judgmental perspective regarding the value of adaptation and the media forms involved. Adaptation is considered to be only one possible effect of a broader logic of cultural tradition and dissemination that rejects individualistic ideas of “author” and “work.” Stam’s rhetorics are also indebted to Mikhail Bakhtin’s concept of dialogism: Bakhtin assumes a “generating series” of literature shaped by a diffuse dissemination of ideas through “powerful deep currents of culture” (3). Thus, dialogism encompasses all expressions, so that new statements presuppose earlier statements and anticipate future responses (Irvine n. pag.). When Stam suggests that “film adaptations can be seen as a kind of multileveled negotiation of intertexts” (“Beyond Fidelity” 67), he limits his discussion of intertextuality to its apologetic potential against fidelity discourse, while both the notion of film adaptation and that of the source novel effectively remain unchallenged. However, generalizations of film adaptation in terms of intertextuality bear the danger of diluting the notion of adaptation, and Stam does not make any suggestions regarding where to draw the line: if all texts partake in dialogism, what shall we consider to be an adaptation, and what not? Or shall we give up the notion of adaptation altogether?

I suggest that in order to account for cinema's historical involvement with literature in terms of a transfer of narrative units (e.g. stories and their characters), we should do as Stam did and keep the notion of adaptation. We should not criticize adaptations for being 'unfaithful,' nor dilute adaptation into a synonym for intertextuality; rather, we should reconsider our idea of how film adaptations can engage with literature and other media. For this purpose, I will draw on the trope of the dialog mainly in order to refer to the process of adaptation in a way that dislocates hierarchies between "original" text and cinematic "copy" anchored in the temporal coming after of the film. André Bazin suggests a similar perspective in his essay "Adaptation, and the Cinema as Digest" from 1948. In an essay ahead of its time, Bazin writes:

> If the film that was made of Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men* . . . had been successful . . . the critic of the year 2050 would find not a novel out of which a play and a film had been "made," but rather a single work reflected through three art forms, an artistic pyramid with three sides, all equal in the eyes of the critic. The "work" would then be an ideal point at the top of this figure, which itself is an ideal construct. The chronological precedence of one part over another would not be an aesthetic criterion any more than the chronological precedence of one twin over the other is a genealogical one. (26)

Bazin here argues that as time passes by, chronological reconstructions of the coming-into-being of different versions matter less than their cultural impact (i.e. their "success").

Instead, “original” and “adaptation” become equal in status as different versions of one “work,” whose integrity remains only a construct.

I would like to relate Bazin’s renunciation of chronologies and hierarchies back to the trope of the dialog in order to sharpen the latter notion as follows: although the genesis of adaptation takes place as a “coming after,” which does indisputably affect reception at first, adaptation soon involves the predecessor in a constellation in which both exist as dialogical partners. Simultaneously present and available to readers/viewers/users, chronologies and hierarchies dissolve as the different media objects equally speak to and comment on each other. Not only is Werner Schroeter’s film *Malina* a possible reading of the book by Ingeborg Bachmann, but the film might just as well affect the way we read the book.

In order to account for adaptation as an intermedial practice, the scope of the concept of dialogism has to be broadened. To this day, the discussion of adaptation as a dialog between text and film mainly centers on the level of content, where film is considered to be able to respond to, comment on, or even challenge the text; Stam’s reflections highlight medium-specificity mainly in terms of different means of conveying narrative. However, adaptation’s potential to reflect on medium-specificity with an interest in formal aspects of different media and their social impact has yet to be foregrounded in adaptation studies. I would like to suggest that adaptation as a dialog between text and film is able to inscribe intermedial reflections and, in the case of gender-oriented adaptation, does so in the form of transgressions of narrative—as organizing principle of both the events and media-specific means of expression. I therefore suggest an understanding of adaptation as an “ongoing dialogical process” (Stam) taking place within a constellation or “figure” (Bazin) where text and film act as contrast medium to one another’s (non-)narrative strategies, aesthetics, and materialities.[1]

Adaptation is not only a constellation of two different media, but also one of two different moments in history. In adaptation as a dialog within an intermedial constellation, the times of production of the involved media meet. Walter Benjamin drew on the notion of the constellation in order to develop an understanding of history and historiography. Benjamin contemplates on the image of the constellation various times throughout his convoluted and fragmentary *Arcades Project* (written between 1927 and 1940) and his essay “On the Concept of History” (1940) as an alternative to the straight line along which history is thought (Rollason n. pag.). As a connection between a past and a present time, the constellation is created by the historiographer and allows for a historical understanding Benjamin describes as shock (Benjamin 262). Although Benjamin is finally interested in a messianic dimension of this constellation in terms of a revolutionary opportunity to “fight for the oppressed past” (263), more significant for my analysis is the fact that his notion of the constellation is supposed to oppose linear historical narrative and ideas of progress. In that way, Benjamin shares some of the ethical concern and skepticism of feminist theorizations of linear narrative.

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[1] The very practice of adaptation introduces an openness to a work. Although strictly speaking every film is based on a text in the form of the screenplay, adaptations point to a text that has previously existed as a “work” within the world of the spectators. Since adaptations dissolve “works” into fellow variations involved in terms of an intermedial constellation, they form a somewhat open structure in general, where the integration of further variations or further media forms becomes possible. Those cases of adaptation that foreground meta-medial reflections piggyback on this inherent openness of adaptation, whereby these reflections are amplified.

We may then rethink the significance of temporality in adaptation. Although the chronology of production of each media object neither determines the order in which each is perceived nor their priority or status, the moment of production is still inscribed into the object. *Les Liaisons Dangereuses* by Pierre Choderlos de Laclos can easily be identified as an 18th-century epistolary novel, while the film adaptation *Cruel Intentions*, directed by Roger Krumble in 1999, is clearly set in the late 1990s. Adaptation then not only effects an intermedial constellation, but also a constellation of two historical moments. The dialog between two different times inscribed into the media objects involved matters in particular if we are interested in adaptation's potential to critically deal with representational conventions: we have to ask whether and in what way adaptation relates to contemporary concerns and media landscapes.

In order to account for the double temporality of adaptation as a dialog, I draw on Dudley Andrew's sketch of what he calls a "sociology of adaptation" (35). Andrew suggests considering the function of adaptation practice to be historic: "Although the volume of adaptation may be calculated as relatively constant in the history of cinema, its particular function at any moment is far from constant. The choices of the mode of adaptation and of prototypes suggest a great deal about the cinema's sense of its role and aspirations from decade to decade" (35). Andrew here describes film adaptation as a practice that can convey a "sense" of cinema's role, considering the strategies of a specific adaptation to be an inscription of contemporary aesthetic and social concerns at the time of production.

From such a historical and sociological perspective, I consider self-reflexive moments in adaptations to be an inscription of adaptation's sense of the role of cinema within the contemporary media landscape. At the end of the 20th century, what is considered to be the "Film Age" (e.g., in 1951 by Anton Hauser, *The Social History of Art* 214) has come to an end in the wake of the digital era. Interestingly enough, mainstream cinema has held on to narrative: "Despite its surface modernity and its technological razzle-dazzle, dominant cinema has maintained, on the whole, a premodernist aesthetic corresponding to that of the nineteenth-century mimetic novel" (Stam, "Beyond Fidelity" 75). Against this backdrop, violations of cinematic conventions in adaptation potentially subvert the medium's oblivion to the "decay of cinema" (Sontag n.pag.), acting as a renunciation of its norms or the medium as a whole. In my analyses of media-skeptical adaptations, I will ask how adaptation as a peculiarly intermedial form of filmmaking—i.e., as it relates cinema to other media—can comment on and alter cinema as a system and social technology in the digital era. If a "reign of the adaptation in which the notion of the unity of the work of art, if not the very notion of the author himself, will be destroyed" is possible, as Bazin suggests (26), then the preconditions for such an age of adaptation have never been as good as they are today.

I discuss an inherent temporality and intermediality of adaptation as dialogical constellation. I consider adaptation as both reflecting on the media forms involved as well as inscribing its historical place within media culture. In order to explicate this potential of adaptation, I focus on gender across media and in adaptation.

1.3 Gender and Representation

My concept of adaptation as a critique of gender in media is grounded in an understanding of gender as a category of difference produced in and through discourse. In that way, my thinking is removed from essentialist understandings of maleness and femaleness that underpinned to some extent many second wave contributions to gender studies, including an "Images of Women" criticism that called for authentic representations female experience, e.g., in the form of literary expression through "*écriture feminine*." Moreover, my account of gender is skeptical of the very idea of representation in that it assumes a dualist distinction of discourse and the discursively represented that I will discuss later in this chapter.

However, my analysis draws on theorizations ranging from second wave to late 20th-century to contemporary accounts of gender, revisiting earlier analyses from the perspective of contemporary needs. In my effort to analyze how media are involved in the constitution of gender, and how adaptation can work as an intermedial intervention, I can neither do without contemporary accounts of the discursive constitution of gender, nor without the careful understanding of strategies specific to some of the most influential forms of media developed by pre-poststructural thinkers, in particular regarding plot dynamics and binary stereotypes. Though these media analyses were pioneered within the constraints of an understanding of gender that was still entangled with the body, they form the undeniable heritage of those that would later set out to untangle these ties.

Moreover, beyond their historical significance, many observations on narrative patterns across media and conventions at work in audio-visual media—developed before post-structuralism and anti-"representationalism" were established—still apply to contemporary mainstream media. Media practices might just be more conservative than academic discourse would have it. Thus, I reconsider gender-oriented analyses of how formal strategies of specific media interact with plot dynamics and map binary stereotypes onto body images: I revisit "misrepresentations" with a contemporary understanding of both gender and media boundaries, exploring how intermedial configurations of self-reflexive cinematic and literary texts shed light on the discursive character of gender.

Most perspectives on gender and narrative consider narrative tradition to be a major force in establishing binary models of gender with a problematic link between sex and gender. Traditional binary codes of gender suggest that female bodies are marked by a concern for appearance, expressions of sexuality, and a reproductive capacity, while male bodies are marked by a concern to establish identity, the privilege of the gaze, and a productive capacity (Balsamo 169). Gender-oriented media analysis is interested in the ways in which either specific media or practices across media have inscribed and are still inscribing a heteronormative model of gender. However, any discussion of the construction of gender implies the possibility of its de-construction. Crucial to my analysis of the texts and films that I discuss will be to show how they position themselves to these conventional inscriptions by involving critical quotations of narrative tradition, and how adaptation can take the form of an intermedial dialog that moves beyond gender binaries.

Gender-oriented accounts of various media have particularly focused on narrative for its impact on both content and formal strategies. As semiotic system, narrative is available to media of distinct materiality, including the merely verbal medium of literature and the audio-visual multi-track medium of film (Andrew 34), which have developed the novel and the narrative fiction film respectively. Linear narrative entails rhetorical requirements that are realized in each medium by specific means according to its materiality: in order to convey a story, mainstream narrative film and literature that follow a representational realism create a consistent space and time that constitute a diegetic story world for the reader or viewer. Formal characteristics of traditional narrative fiction in mainstream literature and film are invested in concealing artifice in favor of illusion.

In cinema, the formal strategies of narrative fiction film have been discussed under the notion of the "invisible style" as described by Robert B. Ray's in his seminal book *A Certain Tendency of the Hollywood Cinema*:

> Lighting, focus, camera angle, framing, character blocking, set design, costuming, and camera distance all worked to keep what the ongoing narrative defined as the main object of interest in the foreground and center of the frame. The inherent discontinuity of editing, on the other hand, was disguised by rules designed to maintain spatial and temporal continuity from shot to shot. Matching successive shots by graphic similarities, continuing action, connecting glances, or common sounds provided one connecting tactic. Another depended on the 180° system, a procedure of filming all takes in an establishing shot-breakdown shot sequence from the same side of an imaginary 180° axis. The 180° system not only allowed

> the filmmaker to maintain constant screen direction (particularly important with horizontal movement in the frame); it also enabled him to break down the overall space of a scene into smaller units without confusing the audience about their spatial relationship. (38-39)

Ray here explains how all of the equipment and other material conditions involved in film production are organized by narrative: they create a focus on what or who is most meaningful in terms of the action. The aforementioned editing strategies, also known as "continuity editing," create the impression of coherence despite the actual discontinuity of the unedited film material, while partaking in these 'centering' strategies, e.g. by "the practice of breaking a scene into matched shots in order to highlight character action and reaction" (Bordwell, "Continuity Revisited" n. pag.). Bordwell, Staiger, and Thompson's *The Classical Hollywood Cinema* (1985) elaborates on the ways in which 20th-century Hollywood cinema hides the materiality of the camera and the necessity of editing: mainstream cinema's conventions render the technologies of cinema quasi "invisible" and eliminate the critical distance of spectators.

The ideological quality of narrative lies in this seemingly invisible rhetoric. Academic discourse has contended that due to the hiding of artifice, traditional narrative fiction discourages any critical distance of the reader or viewer while naturalizing its representational practices. Artistic movements, such as European and US avant-garde filmmaking since the 1920s, responded to the ideological implications of the invisible style with disruptive aesthetic practices that sought to highlight representational norms and allow for reflection. Furthermore, traditional linear narrative can be considered to organize experience in general. Since conventional storytelling in myth and realist mainstream literary and cinematic narrative represents existence as a linear sequence of events, it simultaneously constructs existence along these lines. That is, linear narrative inscribes experience as structured in terms of such a sequence of events. In other words, due to stories as sequences of events linked by causality, we learn that life is (supposed to be) such a story as well. Literary and cinematic experiments that do away with linearity, such as the texts and films that I discuss, thus can be considered not only to challenge aesthetic norms but also ontologies.

Gender-oriented theorizations of narrative contend that the ideological and ontological force of narrative manifests itself in gender concepts. They explore the ideological consequences of narrative for gender relations at the crossroads of content and formal rhetoric. While some analyses focus on plot trajectory and subject-positions, other accounts of narrative's share in gender expectations consider the very emergence of narrative to inscribe gender binaries in life and its representation. The study of gender and narrative is one of various identity-conscious inquiries into narrative practice that emerged of political movements of the 1960s and their academic institutionalization in women's and gender studies, ethnic studies, and postcolonial studies (Lanser n.pag., par. 16). Gender-conscious inquiry into narrative interrogates seeming universals such as established notions of plot, plausibility, taxonomies, typologies, as well as narrative strategies in the context of cultural constructions of gender (ibid. n. pag., par. 3).

The most seminal account of narrative and gender in cinema was developed by Laura Mulvey. Her analysis in 1975 actually precedes the aforementioned theorizations of Hollywood's invisible style, analyzing this style primarily with an interested in its implications for gender binaries. Integrating psychoanalysis, film theory, and feminism in her essay "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," Mulvey points out how mainstream Hollywood cinema grants mainly iconic character to female figures, disciplining spectators to avail themselves of their presence from a voyeuristic position:

> In a world ordered by sexual imbalance, pleasure in looking has been split between active/male and passive/female. The determining male gaze projects its fantasy onto the female figure, which is styled accordingly. In their traditional exhibitionist role women are simultaneously looked at and displayed, with their appearance coded for strong visual and erotic impact so that they can be said to connote *to-be-looked-at-ness*. Woman displayed as sexual object is the *leitmotif* of erotic spectacle. (19)

Mulvey responds to the stylization of female bodies in mainstream cinema, contending that Hollywood cinema organizes sexual difference within a regime of looking. Building on Freud's concept of scopophilia, the pleasure in looking, she suggests that this disposition becomes gendered: coining the notion of the "male gaze," Mulvey describes how spectators are presented with a view on women as erotic spectacle that suggests that looking is an activity of men. Thus, Hollywood inscribes gendered subject-object binaries through acts of looking on- and off-screen.

Mulvey's argument builds on the psychoanalytic construction of subjectivity in vision. This account of subjectivity draws on Lacanian psychoanalysis's understanding of spectator and object: desire arises from the attempt to totalize one's own subjectivity in order to regain an imagined wholeness (Ferguson 82). Mainstream narrative cinema emphasizes gendered vision by coding this subject as "male," whereas the object of desire is coded "female," whereby women's bodies are presented as objects that are viewed rather than as acting themselves (ibid.).

A crucial achievement of Mulvey’s analysis is her interrelating of both dynamics on the content-level of films and technological considerations. According to her analysis, Hollywood’s stories in the 1950s and 1960s follow a narrative grammar that traditionally relies on a male protagonist moving through the story—capable of acting, addressing, and looking at others—and that this grammar has consequences for the way in which the technical set-up and the materiality of the medium is involved. Her concept of the male gaze in cinema integrates the level of story into cinema’s mechanics, suggesting that most films have audiences identify with the gaze and agency of male protagonists, as well as with the gaze of the abstracted cinematic enunciator that stages the female spectacle while granting a voyeuristic position and security to spectators. These subject-object binaries are insofar relevant for my readings as the films I discuss cite such binaries in order to transcend these.

Mulvey’s argument has provoked critical responses that take issue with Mulvey’s concept of the male gaze and masculinization of the spectator (for instance, Silverman 1994, de Lauretis 1984). Her rhetoric can be criticized for remaining trapped in the very binaries at stake. From the perspective of the contemporary poststructuralist understanding of gender, the rhetorics of maleness implies that stereotypical masculinity and heterosexual desire are tied to what is discursively framed as the male body.

Mulvey responded to certain criticisms in her 1981 essay “Afterthoughts on ‘Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema’.” In the brief piece, she rephrases her argument into one that assumes a “‘masculinization’ of the spectator position” (n. pag.), weakening the essentialist undertones through quotation marks and the rhetorical shift from "maleness" to "masculinity," though not disbanding these completely. In particular, Mulvey's "afterthoughts" deal with female spectators and protagonists in an effort to complement her previous discussion of mainstream narrative cinema. Mulvey considers the positionalities of identification available to female spectators, suggesting that "women in the audience" may either find themselves estranged from this masculinization or enjoying the control of the hero over the diegetic world via identification (n. pag.). Mulvey's earlier essay discussed the narrative division of labour that places spectators with the hero primarily in terms of cinema-specific conventions surrounding the look; now, Mulvey emphasizes how popular cinema partakes in traditions of storytelling common across various forms of culture.

According to Mulvey, female spectators either may find themselves estranged and excluded from the visual pleasure offered by the "male gaze" or enjoying identification with the hero and control over the diegetic world—the scenario on which Mulvey elaborates. Mulvey builds on Freud's concept of masculinity in women: according to Freud, femininity is developed through a repression of a striving to be masculine, so that it remains disturbed by residues of the early masculine period. Hollywood genre films, she suggests, offer an identification with the active point of view that allows female spectators to rediscover the lost part of their sexual identity.

Despite her partially naturalizing account of what counts as male, Mulvey's analysis of cinematic conventions still sheds light on contemporary productions. Her theoretical grounding finally has her continue a rhetoric of "maleness" with essentialist undertones when Mulvey suggests that hero stories "describe the male phantasy of ambition" by conveying an expectation of domination (n. pag.). More importantly, however, her analysis of the narrative grammar that designates to woman the function of "the passive, the waiting [entity] . . . , acting above all as a formal closure to the narrative structure" has not lost any significance. Rather, archetypical functions of woman in Hollywood cinema are still so pervasive that recently stars such as Amy Schumer, Julianne Moore, Jennifer Hudson, Maggie Gyllenhaal, and Laura Linney joined forces to mock these roles in a sketch: the female stars appear as Oscar nominees for their roles as "the wife," making the point that they are condemned to reiterate the trope of the hero's complement, who, as Wilstein puts it in his online comment on the sketch, "has nothing to do but cry on the phone" (n. pag.). Mulvey's "Afterthought" also argues that female protagonists do exist, but introducing a female protagonist usually produces a different kind of narrative discourse. Genre films with female protagonists primarily deal with conflicting desires, often in the form of a melodrama (e.g., the protagonist is caught between two men). Mulvey suggests that this oscillating is similar to that of female spectators who temporarily accept "masculinization" in memory of their early masculine period.

In her most recent book, *24x Death per Second*, Mulvey accounts for technological innovation. She re-discusses her essay "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" regarding the consequences that new media technologies have for spectatorship. Mulvey argues that technologies such as video and DVD have changed the way spectators experience film, allowing for what Mulvey calls a cinema of delay: viewers gain control over the image and are able to interfere with narrative flow through easy access to repetition, slow motion, and the individual frame. In particular, she builds on her remarks on the female star's streamlining as erotic spectacle: Mulvey argues that contemporary spectators' ability to fragment narrative's continuity weakens narrative and its effects, whereby they undermine the male protagonist's control over the action. Thus, Mulvey concludes, a new "possessive" and "fetishistic" spectator reconfigures "the power relation between spectator, camera and screen, as well as male and female" (167). However, by suggesting that these operations create a somewhat "feminizing" cinema (ibid.), Mulvey translates new developments back into her binary rhetorics, whereas it does not become clear to what extent this suggests a re-valuation of the valences associated with either term.

The essentialist traits of Mulvey's concept of a male gaze do not nullify the importance of her analysis of vision and gender. Mulvey's ideas about how vision genders bodies mark a founding moment of "gaze theory" (Manlove 84, Ferguson 82). Since Mulvey published her argument on the pleasurable and controlling aspects of the gaze, we understand vision as an important site of gender (Ferguson 82-83). By revisiting her considerations from a perspective informed by Judith Butler's notion of gender performativity that I discuss below, which has cautioned us against any essentialist ideas of "femaleness" and "maleness," we may rephrase Mulvey's argument: while masculinity is constructed as bearing the gaze in most of 20th-century Hollywood mainstream fiction, femininity is constructed as *to-be-looked-at-ness*, as being the object of looking—and positions outside these binary stereotypes and subject-object relations are excluded from what is possible to see and experience.

With its critical focus on the narrativity of mainstream cinema, Mulvey's seminal reflections from 1975 foreshadow analyses of the impact of narrative fiction on Hollywood cinematography in general. These include the aforementioned discussions by Robert B. Ray in *A Certain Tendency of the Hollywood Cinema* (1985) or Bordwell, Staiger, and Thompson's *The Classical Hollywood Cinema* (1985). Moreover, her theorization already considers the resulting cinematic conventions to be gendered in terms of an Oedipal narrative tradition—a consideration that is further explicated later in Teresa de Lauretis's response to Mulvey.

The critique of narrative's contributions to the construction of traditional gender binaries raises the question of how alternatives would look. Female filmmakers who understand their work as a counter-project to the male gaze in mainstream cinema have been discussed under the notion of "Women's Cinema." While the writers and directors whose films and texts I discuss are not exclusively female, some characteristics discussed in the discourse on "Women's Cinema" are helpful for my analysis. By pointing out how their formal strategies suspend gendered subject positions shaped through narrative tradition, I show how the films and texts actually take part in the discourse on narrative and gender. Most helpful for my analysis are therefore such discussions of "Women's Cinema" that center on formal aspects of the works rather than the filmmakers' gender identity.

The plot-oriented analyses of Teresa de Lauretis continue the conversation surrounding Hollywood narrative and the idea of "Women's Cinema." In particular, her essay "Desire in Narrative," published in *Alice Doesn't: Feminism, Semiotics, Cinema*

(1987), centers on how stories are concerned with constructing a binary opposition in which a male-subject-hero inscribes desire, while "woman" is constructed in the service of this desire. "Desire in Narrative" argues that these mythical mechanics and the differences these inscribe are still active even in our contemporary stories including those told in mainstream cinema.

Her essay sets off by responding to Mulvey's dictum that sadism demands a story. De Lauretis suggests that this statement implies its reversal: she interprets Mulvey's concept of sadism as the generative force of narrative (103) rather than something located at the level of content, as structural models of narrative suggest (104). In order to further explore in what ways desire works along narrative lines, de Lauretis reconsiders the relations of narrative to genres, epistemological frameworks, and various conditions for the presence of narrative ranging from myth and folktale to drama, cinema, historical narration, and others (105). She reformulates the work of narrativity as the "engagement of the subject in certain positionalities of meaning and desire" (106). Thus, de Lauretis argues against accounts of narrative that dehistoricize and universalize the subject, stressing instead that the subject is constituted through its engagement in the aforementioned narrative genres. Furthermore, de Lauretis stresses the material inscription of the relation of narrative and desire, naming as an example the material specificity of cinema due to the medium's socioeconomic and technological dimension (106).

De Lauretis analyzes ancient myths according to the positionalities in which these engage the subject. Monsters such as Medusa or the Minotaur, she argues, stand for the symbolic transposition of the place where they stand, meaning that they signify the test imposed on man during his journey. Rather than having their own story, these monsters are figures of places and topoi through which the hero and his story move to reach their destination and accomplish meaning (109). Gender representations are related to these places and topoi in the hero's journey in a manner that articulates sexual difference in terms of "man" and "non-man": the Minotaur is more beast than man, representing the bestial side of man that has to be conquered, whereas Medusa and the Sphinx are more human and female; the latter lure man's vision through their enigma, threatening to blind him (109-110). Thereby, monsters characterized as female represent obstacles that man encounters on his way to wisdom and power (110).

In particular, de Lauretis is interested in assumptions about sexual difference inscribed in narrative. In the stories involving female monsters, femininity acts as a riddle, whereas the desire to solve this riddle generates the narrative. De Lauretis interrelates Oedipus's solving of the riddle of the Sphinx to Freud's "femininity," read along the lines of Shoshana Felman's discussion: Freud speaks of people have struggled with what he calls the riddle of femininity, thereby excluding women from this question and effectively asking what femininity is for men. Thus, the question of femininity is one of men's desire to know (111). Moreover, de Lauretis reveals that Freud's story of femininity is governed by the same mechanisms and teleology as myths: progression is toward the Oedipal stage, whereas Freud frames as "regression" any behavior in which the "phallic phase" makes itself felt in a way that impedes the fulfillment of male desire and narrative closure (142).

De Lauretis considers Oedipus's story to be paradigmatic of all narratives. His desire (for woman, knowledge, power, etc.) addresses man, namely "man as social being and mythical subject, founder of the social order, and source of mimetic violence" (112). Despite the wide variety of genres, rituals, and social discourses, narrative movement takes the recurring form of a passage and transformation predicated on the figure of a hero (113). Moreover, this movement follows an Oedipal logic according to de Lauretis: "All narrative, in its movement forward toward resolution and backward to an initial moment, a paradise lost, is overlaid with what has been called an Oedipal logic—the inner necessity or drive of the drama—its 'sense of an ending' inseparable from the memory of loss and the recapturing of time" (125). Narrative patterns thereby frame experience "as epic or dramatic action" due to the structuring capacity of these patterns (126).

De Lauretis builds on Lotman's analysis of character types. In his work on plot typology, Lotman suggests that there are two types of characters, those who are mobile and move through the plot space, and those who are immobile, representing a function of this space in terms of a personified obstacle. Accordingly, Lotman identifies a narrative pattern that describes a chain of entries into and emergences from enclosed spaces (117-118). De Lauretis points out that Lotman's findings are suggestive of Mulvey's account of sadism (118), which, as discussed before, focuses on winning a battle of strength or forcing a change in another person.

These narrative patterns correspond with the monomyth identified by Joseph Campbell, which became known as "the hero's journey." In his comparative mythologist studies, Campbell identifies this narrative archetype, which takes the form of an adventure full of tests and obstacles. Key elements of this pattern are the passing of a threshold and a series of obstacles: “Once having traversed the threshold, the hero moves in a dream landscape of curiously fluid, ambiguous forms, where he must survive a succession of trials. This is a favorite phase of the myth-adventure. It has produced a world literature of miraculous tests and ordeals” (Campell 81). Though originally identified in oral and written narrative, “the hero’s journey” was translated into a paradigm of screenwriting and became a normative pattern in Hollywood cinema. Peter Brooks stresses the role that gender plays in this narrative tradition, coining the notion of the “male plot of ambition”—both a theme and a dynamic of plot. Brooks understands story as the ordering of temporal progress into a satisfying whole, which is particularly reliant on a proper closure (Brooks 104, Felluga n. pag.): “The desire of the text (the desire of reading) is hence desire for the end, but desire for the end reached only through the at least minimally complicated detour, the intentional deviance, in tension, which is the plot of narrative” (104). According to Brooks, ambition’s totalizing of the world “as possession and progress” (39) also makes the ambitious hero a figure of the reader’s efforts to construct meaning.

Both Lotman and de Lauretis understand narrative as a “powerful means of making sense of life” (Lotman 182, see also de Lauretis, “Desire and Narrative” 120). Besides historically specific ideas, texts based on plot transmit a mythical schema through recurring themes such as fall and rebirth, resurrection, or enlightenment. Thus, cyclical mechanisms continue to work through narrative (“Desire in Narrative” 120). In particular, de Lauretis highlights Lotman's suggestion that mythical, plot-based texts serve to establish distinctions and relate remote phenomena to one another: they reduce a variety of occurrences to invariant images and play the classifying role of science ("Desire in Narrative" 117, Lotman 162).

Building on Lotman's thesis, de Lauretis stresses the significance of sexual difference: it is first and foremost sexual difference that is mapped onto narrative texts. She argues that the obstacle, regardless of the gender of its "text-image," is morphologically female, since according to Lotman, the closed space can be interpreted as cave, woman, and womb ("Desire and Narrative" 118-119). The picture of the world produced in myth then rests on sexual difference as the primary distinction; whereas other opposite pairs such as inside/outside or life/death are derivatives of the fundamental opposition between boundary and passage. This passage is predicated on the hero, who, as de Lauretis writes, penetrates the other space and in doing so is constructed as human being and as male (119): "He is the active principle of culture, the establisher of distinction, the creator of differences. Female is what is not susceptible to transformation, to life or death; she (it) is an element of plot-space, a topos, a resistance, matrix and matter" (119). It is important to note that de Lauretis here argues that the binary positions in narrative, that of the moving protagonist and that of the plot space as antagonist, are signifying sexual difference even if the figures' genders do not indicate this (e.g, even if a monster does not have a female body).

This mapping of sexual difference bears consequences for the way in which the reader/viewer is engaged. De Lauretis suggests that the movement of the narrative places readers and viewers in certain positions in the plot-space:

> Much as social formations and representations appeal to and position the individual as subject in the process to which we give the name of ideology, the movement of narrative discourse shifts and places the reader, viewer, or listener in certain portions of the plot space. Therefore, to say that narrative is the production of Oedipus is to say that each reader—male or female—is constrained and defined within the two positions of a sexual difference thus conceived: male-hero-human, on the side of the subject; and female-obstacle-boundary-space, on the other. (121)

Through this positioning of readers and viewers, these are constrained within the two positions of heteronormative sexual difference, and it is through this placing of readers/viewers that they grasp this difference. De Lauretis here sums up the two available positions by dint of the notions of a "male-hero-human" and a "female-obstacle-boundary-space," highlighting the idea that subjectivity is conflated with "maleness" alone. It is for this reason that de Lauretis's reading of Lotman stresses that this mythical mechanism produces everything other than the "male-hero-human" as an abstract "non-man."

Building on this analysis, de Lauretis approaches the question of the female reader and spectator. She recapitulates Freud's theorization of femininity as a "story of femininity," the journey of the female child through the Oedipus complex and to womanhood, passivity, and a biological destiny defined by reproduction (131-132), as paradigmatic example for narrative's Oedipal logic in general: "The story of femininity, Freud's question, and the riddle of the Sphinx all have a single answer, one and the same meaning, one term of reference and address: man, Oedipus, the human male person. And so her story, like any other story, is a question of his desire; as is the teleology that Freud imputes to Nature, that primordial 'obstacle' of civilized man" (133). De Lauretis here complements Freud's account based on her discussion of narrative, furthermore suggesting that in any story, the body of the female child is not her own, since she has come to see it as a territory mapped by the desire of heroes (132).

Regarding sadism, de Lauretis concludes that Mulvey's suggestion should be reversed. Sadism does not only demand a story, as Mulvey suggests, but "story demands sadism, depends on…forcing a change in a person" ("Desire in Narrative" 132). The girl's transition to womanhood, which is mapped on the territory of her body, shows her to not have a destiny of her own; rather, she has her function in the destiny of the man who is promised a woman. De Lauretis remarks accordingly: "And so her story, like any other story, is a question of his desire" (133) that requires of her a feminine position (134). De Lauretis therefore specifies her understanding of sadism and narrative as follows: "Women must either consent or be seduced into consenting to femininity. This is the sense in which sadism demands a story or story demands sadism" (134).

Lastly, de Lauretis approaches cinema and femininity. "Film narrative too, if Lotman's typology be credited, is a process by which the text-images distributed across the film (they be images of people, objects, or of movement itself) are finally regrouped in the two zones of sexual difference, from which they take their culturally reconstructed meaning: mythical subject and obstacle, maleness and femaleness" (139). Thus, de Lauretis argues, the mythical mapping of binary oppositions that signify sexual difference is also at work in cinema, providing spectators with two oppositional positionalities. Regarding the female spectators, de Lauretis suggests that narrative cinema engages the subjectivity of women spectators by offering them an identification that finally “seduces” them to consent to femininity shaped by Oedipal desire (136-138).

To further discuss the centrality of the look in cinema, de Lauretis draws on Mulvey’s analysis developed in “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema,” elaborating on her analysis of mythical plot trajectories:

> If the female position in narrative is fixed by the mythical mechanism in a certain portion of the plot-space, which the hero crosses or crosses to, a quite similar effect is produced in narrative by the apparatus of looks converging on the female figure. The woman is framed by the look of the camera as icon, or object of the gaze: an image made to be looked at by the spectator, whose look is relayed by the look of the male character(s). (139)

De Lauretis here integrates Mulvey’s analysis into her own discussion of mythical mechanisms in narrative to shed new light on female characters and spectatorship. Informed by Mulvey, de Lauretis contends that cinema integrates voyeurism into the conventions of storytelling, combining visual and narrative pleasure and articulating a female position similar to that in mythical plot space. In a way similar to the “non-man” abstractions in mythical narrative, female characters in cinema mark a portion of plot-space through or to which the hero will cross:

> In that landscape, stage, or portion of plot-space, the female character may be all along, throughout the film, representing and literally marking out the place (to) which the hero will cross. There she simply awaits his return like Darling Clementine; as she indeed does in countless Westerns, war, adventure movies, providing the ‘love interest’ . . . Or she may resist confinement in that symbolic space by disturbing it, . . . seeking to exceed the boundary—visually as well as narratively—as in film noir. Or again, when the film narrative centers on a female protagonist, in melodrama, in the ‘woman’s film,’ etc., the narrative is patterned

> on a journey,…whose possible outcomes are those outlined by Freud's mythical story of femininity [i.e., as a journey to womanhood characterized by passivity, C.M.] . . . In the happy ending, the protagonist will reach the place (the space) where a modern Oedipus will find her and fulfill the promise of his (off-screen) journey. (139)

By heavily drawing on Mulvey, including the latter's not explicitly quoted "Afterthoughts on 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema,'" de Lauretis here gives various examples of how female characters' function is played out in specific genres. For instance, she is awaiting the hero in her function of the "love interest" in numerous war, adventure, and Western films, or in the case of the melodrama, she is the protagonist only to arrive at womanhood so that she can become part of a male hero's story.

Moreover, woman comes to signify closure. Informed by Stephen Heath's understanding of narrative as a process of restoration,[2] de Lauretis suggests that the female position represents narrative closure in so far as it figures the achieved movement of the narrative (140). Due to this Oedipal logic, the "promotion stills and posters outside the cinema" (and online banners, I might add) do not just show "an image of woman" but "the narrative image of woman" (140), i.e., the image of her narrative position that interlocks visual and narrative registers. Woman comes to signify the narrative promise made to the boy effected by mainstream narrative cinema.

Regarding identification in women spectators, de Lauretis reconsiders Freud's ideas on alternation between masculinity and femininity. The latter are positions occupied in relation to desire rather than qualities inherent in a person (142-143). It is precisely through this focus on alternation that de Lauretis reformulates Mulvey's argument:

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[2] De Lauretis builds on Stephen Heath's *Questions of Cinema* (1981).

> The analogy that links identification-with-the-look to masculinity and identification-with-the-image to femininity breaks down precisely when we think of a spectator alternating between the two . . . . No image can be identified, or identified with, apart from the look that inscribed it as image, and vice versa. If the female subject were indeed related to the film in this manner, its division would be irreparable, unsuturable; no identification or meaning would be possible. (143)

De Lauretis suggests that this unsolved contradiction between the assumed identifications with the look and the image has led film theorists—and this implies Mulvey as well—to disregard women spectators, instead defining cinematic identification as masculine, i.e. as identification with the gaze as a figure of male desire.

De Lauretis offers an alternative view on women's spectatorship by suggesting that women engage in a two-fold process of identification. The movement of narrative discourse (in cinema and beyond) is that of the male and female child toward the Oedipal stage: it produces the masculine position as that of the mythical subject, and the feminine position as mythical space or obstacle (143). Women spectators identify simultaneously with both the subject and the space, meaning with both the narrative movement and its closure in the narrative image. This double-identification relates them to both positionalities of desire, namely the "desire for the other, and desire to be desired by the other" (143). De Lauretis suggests that this double-identification produces a surplus of pleasure that seduces women into femininity (ibid). Thus, for women spectatorship in cinema, de Lauretis comes to define two sets of identifications: in addition to the masculinizing identification with the gaze (of the camera and male characters) and with the image (i.e., the body and the landscape) highlighted for instance by Mulvey, female spectators also identify with the narrative movement and subject as well as with narrative closure. The latter set, the figural narrative identification, anchors the subject in the film's flow, making identification possible to women who would otherwise be stranded between the gaze and the image, an either impossible or merely masculine identification.[3]

De Lauretis builds on Chatman's notion of narrative pressure in cinema to reframe spectators' masculinization. She quotes Chatman's differentiation between literary and cinematic narrative: in contrast to the flexible pace of reading literature, cinema's temporality causes a (stronger) narrative pressure; the spectator takes in all of the visual details presented throughout the sequence of events at a stipulated pace (146). De Lauretis suggests that this pressure derives from narrative as Oedipal drama (and not just sequence of events): narrative pressure bears on cinematic images in the terms of Oedipal desire (148). Cinematic images present "a picture of the world of 'visible things,' whose standard of meaning and measure of desire are inscribed, incorporated in the spectator's own vision," and it is this vision that "produces the spectator as Oedipus, male subject, restoring to him…a vision capable of exciting desire for the princess and the serpent… and thus allows him to cope with the contradictions of his increasingly difficult task in the patriarchal and capitalist state where cinema exists" (148). De Lauretis argues here that images are shaped by narrative's inscription of the movement and positionalities of desire. They therefore involve social and personal practices: both filmmakers and spectators are subjects in history, and not only meaning but "vision itself, the very possibility or impossibility of ‘seeing’ the film would depend on its engagement of a historically and socially constituted subjectivity” (149). De Lauretis delineates the historically specific constitution of female subjectivity in her time as one that constructs the female body as site of pleasure and sexuality (151).

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[3] De Lauretis's argument here runs counter to Metz's formulation of primary cinematic identification: Metz contends that spectators identify with the act of perception, whereas de Lauretis argues that the identification with the narrative movement is what makes other identifications possible ("Desire and Narrative" 144).

Finally, de Lauretis sketches alternative ways of engaging spectators. Since she argues that the spectator’s identification is guided by the figures of narrative and the place of the look as specific cinematic-narrative codes, these could be reworked (153). De Lauretis suggests that identification could be shifted to the positionalities that define the female’s Oedipal situation without resolving these. Hence, a biological essence still underpins this conception of an alternative cinema to some degree. Other than Mulvey, who suggests that feminist filmmaking has to refrain from producing visual pleasure through narrative, de Lauretis argues that a different desire and social subject can be created—however not without crediting previous knowledge produced on and through feminism and film (155). Writes de Lauretis: “For the theory and practice of women’s cinema, this would entail a continued and sustained work with and against narrative, in order to represent not just the power of female desire but its duplicity and ambivalence” (156). These suggestions run counter to both the call for the destruction of visual (and narrative) pleasure, and the idea of normative narrative addressing liberation. Rather, de Lauretis reformulates “women’s cinema” as one that enacts contradictions within women as social subjects and an “awareness that subjects are historically engendered in social practices” such as cinema (ibid.). The goal would be to interrupt the track by which narrative, meaning, and pleasure are constructed from Oedipus’s point of view (157). De Lauretis calls for a women's cinema that is not anti-narrative or anti-Oedipal, but rather "Oedipal with a vengeance" that stresses the "specific contradiction of the female subject" in the scenario (ibid.).

In her essay "Rethinking Women's Cinema" (1985), de Lauretis, though exclusively concerned with female filmmakers, suggests rethinking the idea of women's cinema in terms of address. She first traces a shift in feminist filmmaking from a documentation of social reality toward experimental takes on the medium (26). In accordance with what Laura Mulvey sketched in her essay "Feminism, Film, and the Avant-Garde" (1979), de Lauretis highlights this shift as a partial rapprochement of feminist filmmaking with avant-garde cinema (and its canon of male directors): both endeavors are interested in the political dimension of aesthetic expression, taking a stance against a realism that they perceive as compromised by bourgeois ideology. Instead, both movements favor a foregrounding of the "cinematic process" ("Feminism, Film, Avant-Garde" 7). As de Lauretis points out, Mulvey's propositions for subversive filmmaking in her seminal essay "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," which target narrative and visual pleasure in cinema, echo with the tradition of left avant-garde film practices in the sense that they seek to "free the look of the camera into its materiality in time and space and the look of the audience into . . . detachment" ("Narrative Cinema" 18).

De Lauretis suggests that critics should respond to this rapprochement of left avant-garde and women's cinema. Theory should rethink women's cinema as a transformation of "social vision" that allows her as spectator "to see difference differently," i.e. to look at women in ways that have been largely excluded from

Hollywood filmmaking. By asking: “Who is making films for whom, who is looking and speaking, how, where, and to whom,” de Lauretis identifies certain “women’s films” which, as she puts it, address their spectator *as a woman* (35). Although this idea of a different way of addressing spectators remains vague, de Lauretis’s lead is highly suggestive. Despite the fact that de Lauretis still thinks of a counter-cinema as one made by women, her reflections suggest that theory should rethink what makes “woman’s cinema” in terms of address and vision: changing structures of address might entail new positionalities available to spectators that lie outside the binary oppositions inscribed through mythical mechanisms. We might as well rethink a counter-cinema to Hollywood to be independent from the gender of its makers, as well as to offer positions that lie beyond that of women and outside binaries surrounding gender and sex altogether.

Although most of the texts and films that I discuss usually are not considered to be part of “Women’s Writing” or “Women’s Cinema”—Bachmann’s novel being the notable exception—, the debates provide a valuable theoretical vocabulary for exploring the way these texts and films relate formal experiments with the negotiation of gender relations. Mulvey’s theoretical and Bachmann’s literary explorations of power in gender relations, written in the 1970s, are near-contemporaneous, and so are de Lauretis’s essayistic and Schroeter’s cinematic responses to Mulvey and Bachmann respectively, which were produced between 1985 and 1990. An analytical framework built of both recent theorizations of gender and concepts contemporaneous to the texts and films at stake helps identify both the historical inscriptions and timely significance of the works. Moreover, my analysis seeks to mobilize these contributions beyond the canon of

“Women’s Cinema” in order to identify further practices that transform social vision. The texts and films that I examine articulate similar concerns as the films discussed in de Lauretis's “women’s cinema”: they share with “women’s cinema” formal experiments that reflect on representation and difference, engaging “in the project of transforming vision by inventing the forms and processes of representation of a social subject, women, that until now has been all but unrepresentable” (de Lauretis, “Women’s Cinema” 46). By reworking the narrative space and strategies of spectators’ address in traditional representation, the works that I discuss transgress narratively inscribed binaries of gender difference beyond the absence of women as subjects, pursuing a transformation of vision and experience through reading and viewing.

To theorize the construction of gender across various discursive practices, de Lauretis coined the notion of the “technology of gender” in her eponymous essay published in 1987. This concept accounts for the gendering of subjectivity through interactions with discourses, representations, practices, and institutions, which she considers to be “technologies.”

De Lauretis builds on Michel Foucault’s notion of social technology. According to Foucault, power only seems to rest in institutions or persons, whereas it actually “has its principle . . . in a certain concerted distribution of bodies, surfaces, lights, gazes; in an arrangement whose internal mechanisms produce the relation in which individuals are caught up” (Foucault 202). Power is exercised through knowledge, which is obtained and deployed through techniques that act on the behavior of individuals and groups, whereby subjects are produced (Derksen and Beaulieu 704). Foucault’s theorization has gained significance in feminist theory particularly for its idea of power as a productive rather than repressive force.

In the case of sexuality, however, De Lauretis contends that Foucault’s critique of sexuality as the technology of sex does not account for gender, as it does differentiate between male and female subjects. Thus, her notion of the technology of gender is meant to address this gap as a framing device to describe the construction of gender: “The construction of gender goes on today through various technologies of gender (e.g. cinema) and individual discourses (e.g. theory) with the power to control the field of social meaning and thus produce, promote, and implant’ representations of gender” (18). Technologies of gender thus encompass media forms, narratives, institutions, and theories through which gender is constructed.

De Lauretis defines gender as follows: gender is a social position that carries differential meaning, which “both as representation and as self-representation, is the product of various social technologies, such as cinema, and of institutionalized discourses, epistemologies, and critical practices, as well as practices of daily life” (“Technology of Gender” 2). This definition of gender addresses how seemingly disparate practices have a share in the construction of gender: framing all of these practices as social technologies that bear representational character, de Lauretis conceptualizes gender as an effect of the representations produced in and across these technologies. Cross-cutting different sites of representation, codes of gender are embodied and reproduced in interaction with these representations (Balsamo 169).

De Lauretis further elaborates on the relationship between representation and construction: “The representation of gender *is* its construction—and in the simplest sense it can be said that all of Western Art and high culture is the engraving of the history of that construction” (“Technologies of Gender” 3). In other words, representing gendered subjects is a practice of en-gendering subjects, i.e. making subjects gendered. Artistic or medial representation and construction of gender coincide, while gender is being created and updated in an ongoing process of repetition and variation through the interaction of subjects with social technologies.

Teresa de Lauretis’s thoughts here are akin to those of Judith Butler, whom I discuss below, in so far as some of de Lauretis’s writings, in particular “The Technology of Gender,” point into the direction of understanding gender beyond sexual difference. Both thinkers frame gender as the effect of an ongoing process. Particular to de Lauretis’s account of gender, however, is her inclusion of theory as discursive practice that produces gender. De Lauretis argues that theorizations shape gender, namely that both theories that are and those that are not concerned with gender contain and promote some representation of gender (“Technologies of Gender” 19, Carter 369). This means that every feminist theorization is a technology of gender, since it produces a certain concept of gender. Moreover, theories that do not deal with gender produce ideas of gender through exclusion.

While de Lauretis’s theorization is akin to Butler’s notion of gender performativity, a striking difference lies in de Lauretis’s notion of representation. Since the idea of representation implies separate domains of (representing) words and (represented) things, this notion to some extent runs counter to Butler's deconstruction of sex when it comes to gender: although bodies matter in Butler, it is not possible to describe, experience, or observe these in any pre-discursive state, as sex and gender get inscribed from the beginning of their existence. De Lauretis still frames gender by way of a rhetoric of representation that seems problematic in light of the recent criticism of what Karen Barad called "representationalism." Barad suggests moving beyond the notion of representation, which she defines as the belief in the ontological distinction between words and things in terms of representations and that which they are supposed to represent (804). "Representationalism" thus assumes a pre-discursive reality and calls for appropriate representation thereof. However, though speaking of representation, de Lauretis builds on Foucault's discourse analysis, which questioned any understanding of words and things as ontologically separate. When de Lauretis suggests that gender *is* its representation, meaning the represented is produced in the moment of representation, she effectively superimposes representation and the represented, words and things, contradicting previous notions of representation. Rather than producing a representationalist account of gender, de Lauretis's technology of gender seems to mark a sort of interim concept, a notion in transition from representationalism toward a more radical constructivist thinking about gender as explicated by Judith Butler.

An influential analysis of the auditory representation of gender in cinema was developed by Kaja Silverman. In her book *The Acoustic Mirror* (1988), Silverman argues that classic narrative cinema uses sexual difference to deny men's experience of lack by projecting lack onto female characters (1). Thus, she argues, film is preoccupied with male subjectivity (2). The ways in which cinema involves the female voice serves this purpose of sexual difference: according to Silverman, mainstream cinema has a tendency to tie the female voice to the female body, whereby the female voice is denied authorial quality, since a voice "loses power and authority with every corporeal encroachment, from a regional accent or idiosyncratic 'grain' to definitive localization in the image" (49). Disembodied voiceovers as exceptions from the synchronization of voice and body mainly involve male voices: by transcending the body, these voices are placed in a privileged position outside of the diegesis as a position of discursive authority (49)—qualities that, though most clearly designated by the voice-over, are also apparent in other uses of male voices in mainstream cinema (51).

Silverman's theorization of sexual difference in cinema integrates reflections on both a dualism of interiority/exteriority and male/female. Classic cinema (i.e., realist Hollywood cinema), she argues, uses the interiority/exteriority antithesis to define the levels of fiction and enunciation (56). Silverman relates this consideration about fiction and enunciation to the incorporation of female voices in cinema: by tying female voices to bodies, these voices are contained within the diegesis (i.e., the story world). "'Interior' rhymes with 'inferior' to such a degree in classical cinema that sexual difference is the usual vehicle for its articulation" (56).

Silverman identifies three operations that draw on female voices to inscribe dichotomies of interiority and exteriority. The first strategy is to locate female voices in "what is overtly indicated as an inner textual space" (56): appearing in a film-within-a-film, a stage performance, or a painting, the female voice is "doubly diegeticized" (57), and can be overheard by both the spectators of the film and the male character on screen. Silverman calls the second strategy “the talking cure”: involuntary utterances suggest that she is exposing a psychic reality (59). The third strategy that inscribes the boundary between diegetic interiority and exteriority is vocal corporealization: “in the guise of accent, speech impediment, timbre, or ‘grain,’” the body is tied to the female voice, resulting in linguistic incapacity and vulnerability (61). This corporealization identifies the female voice with materiality, emphatically placing the female voice within the diegetic scene, whereas the male subject and his voice is staged as enunciator, i.e., the entity that orchestrates the performance of the female body and voice (62).

Furthermore, Silverman complements the theory of suture with her argument on sexual difference in cinema. The concept of suture addresses the fact that cinema involves an enunciating agency that is not the scriptwriter or director, contrary to the humanist view of authorship (11). Enunciation is covered over by what Silverman calls a harmonizing representation: the fact that cinema’s enunciating agency inhabits a different scene from that of the viewer is potentially disruptive of spectators’ pleasure, this it would remind them of a field beyond spectators’ vision and possession (ibid.). To reassure spectators that their gaze is not constrained, classic cinema has developed strategies to distract from the fact that the enunciator is absent from the filmic construction; for instance, the shot/reverse shot technique involves a shot that shows someone looking, while the next shot seems to show the object of the gaze, whereby a fictional character stands in for the authoritative vision of the invisible enunciator (12). Silverman suggests that this compensatory representation is coded as male (13).

I build on the theorizations by Mulvey, de Lauretis, and Silverman in order to frame my analysis of the nexus of gender and space in and across the media that I discuss. The texts and films that I analyze develop their nexus of gender and space in order to blur boundaries of “in- and outside.” To be more precise, I suggest that in the texts and films that I examine, dichotomies of subject-object relations, gender binaries, and spatial boundaries between the “inside” and “outside” are only quoted from a critical distance: they are implied as predominant organizational principles in a narrative tradition in order to be displaced. My analysis of narrative is interested in all operations that create narrative coherence and divert attention from the level of enunciation to the level of fiction. Furthermore, I argue that in the adaptations that I discuss, reflections on classical cinema and gender binaries finally culminate in stagings of the discursive power of female protagonists that undo traditional functions of female characters in narrative. In such instances, female protagonists appear to influence or take over cinematic enunciation, manipulating their own cinematic representation. Figures of the reversal of subject-object binaries only form an intermediate step in the intermedial displacing of gender binaries. The latter are not reversed but rather replaced by the construction of a subjectivity that operates in a manner that undoes the boundaries of inside and outside of diegesis.

This challenging of realist, Oedipal narrative in the texts and films that I discuss is neither performed as a reversal of gendered powered relations, which would continue binary structures anchored in narrative, nor as a “correction” of images of women in media. Rather, dichotomies of gender and space are either displaced or even done away with through discursive practices that reveal the very character of these dichotomies to be discursive effects. As my readings will show, in Bachmann, Schroeter, Kafka, and Lynch, media-specific conventions that create narrative coherence become the center of attention as they come undone, while the negotiation of gender relations on the content level show the latter to be discursive effects.

In contrast to literature or film alone, adaptation's intermedial constellation bears the unique potential to negotiate narrative as a semiotic system that is operative across media while manifesting itself in media-specific formal means of narrative organization. Bearing in mind that narrative is a prevalent technology of gender—a cultural force in constructing gender in and through discursive practices—, narrative-critical adaptation can rearticulate gendered subjectivities constructed in narrative representation. Along these lines, I reframe adaptation as comparative reflection on narrativity and gender in different media, analyzing their self-reflexivity within their media-specific contexts.

Contemporary accounts of the development of gender theories and feminist thought in the 20th and 21st century tend to reduce contributions from the seventies to essentialism. Clare Hemmings interrogates the dominant developmental narrative in feminist theory:

> Western feminist theory tells its own story as a developmental narrative, where we move from a preoccupation with unity and sameness, through identity and diversity, and on to difference and fragmentation. These shifts are broadly conceived of as corresponding to the decades of the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s respectively, and to a move from liberal, socialist and radical feminist thought to postmodern gender theory. A shift from the naïve, essentialist seventies, through the black feminist critiques and 'sex wars' of the eighties, and into the 'difference' nineties and beyond, charts the story as one of *progress* beyond falsely boundaried categories and identities. (116-117)

Hemmings cautions her readers against this story of progress that repeatedly positions poststructuralist feminists as the first to challenge the category "woman" as the subject and object of feminist knowledge (115, 128) while framing the seventies as necessarily essentialist, an "accusation so frequently repeated, that it can actually stand as justification for not reading texts from the feminist seventies at all any more" (120). As a point of culmination in this perceived progress, poststructuralism appears to have both surpassed the essentialism of the seventies and incorporated the identities associated with sexual difference, sexuality, and race in the eighties (126). However, the counter idea of a "return" to "real," everyday experience before poststructuralism retains the same teleology (128).

My discussion of gender theories is in part guilty of reproducing this developmental story.[4] However, I do not intend to follow the trend identified by Hemmings, namely that work from the feminist seventies is rarely directly cited (instead implicated by juxtaposition of a "then" and "now," 122). Rather, I contend that seminal writings from the seventies and eighties on media and binary gender concepts have to be revisited from a contemporary perspective that reveals their in part non-essentialist and path-breaking contributions. It has been pointed out how Laura Mulvey's "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" uses a rhetoric of "male" and "female" that reproduces binary and essentialist ideas of identity. Feminist concerns with women in media, along with black feminist critique of feminism (Hemming 122), now take the role of a historical position in academic discourse that has been overcome by poststructuralism. However, Mulvey's analysis of binary positions in narrative mainstream cinema cannot count as obsolete around the turn of the 21st century, since large parts of Hollywood cinema are still formulaic, recasting "men" as "subject" and "woman" as accessory matter or essence.[5]

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[4] This is in part because the outlined story of feminist thought makes it necessary to highlight for readers the following: a non-essentialist understanding of gender informs my analyses despite the fact that I involve pre-poststructuralist writings.

The academic dismissal of theorizations from the seventies and eighties as merely historic phenomena, along with the current status of poststructuralism as the predominant way to deal with difference, engenders a rhetorical problem: we, who have done away with essentialist ideas of "man" and "woman," binary definitions of gender, and even the dualism of materiality and representation, still need to address the fact that most of the popular manifestations of gender have remained unbothered by our deconstructions. Thus, we still need a vocabulary that allows us to deal with these manifestations.

To analyze gender as a discursive effect rearticulated through adaptation, I further ground my analysis in contemporary theorizations of gender that share a tendency to understand gender as undergoing constant reconfigurations through performativity and in connection with environments, technologies, and other forces. Towards the end of the next sub-chapter, I will revisit theorizations from the seventies and eighties from a contemporary perspective.

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[5] A recent analysis of 2000 screenplays (the self-proclaimed "largest ever analysis of film dialogue by gender") has shown that 22% of these films had female leads (Anderson and Daniels 2016). Moreover, even films with female leads tend to have men speak more than women, since they rarely include additional female characters that have a lot of dialogue, but rather involve male side characters. For instance, in 1990s Disney princess films, men's speech takes up more than 60% of dialog (ibid.).

1.4 Reconfiguring Gender

Poststructuralist feminism has further developed the terms of feminist debates around representation. Poststructuralist writings such as those of Judith Butler address implied binaries and essentialist ideas at work in previous theorizations surrounding "women." Thus, their approaches call into question the very categories that had previously been taken for granted (Carter 366-365).

Butler's thinking builds on poststructuralism's critique of binary oppositions. The latter form a basis of Western metaphysics, which get undermined through poststructuralist deconstructions that never stabilize any meaning (Salih 21). Particularly important for Butler was Michel Foucault's theorization of power. Butler recapitulates Foucault's non-representational understanding of power at the onset of her influential book *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*: *"*Foucault points out that juridical systems of power *produce* the subjects they subsequently come to represent. Juridical notions of power appear to regulate political life in purely negative terms…But the subjects regulated by such structures are, by virtue of being subjected to them, formed, defined, and reproduced in accordance with the requirements of those structures" (2). Foucault's notion of discourse refers to a group of statements that governs the way we perceive and speak about a historical moment, analyzing how discursive formations presuppose subject positions and constitute concepts (Salih 47): *The History of Sexuality*, for instance, introduced the idea that sexuality is not primarily repressed, but rather a concept that is produced in and through discourse.

Butler draws on Foucault's thinking in so far as the latter considers power structures to be generative rather than merely repressive and also contain the possibility of subversion (Salih 36, 38). In order to overcome the essentialism surrounding gender, sex, and sexuality, Butler elaborates on this understanding of power: "If this analysis is right, then the juridical formation of language and politics that represents women as 'the subject' of feminism is itself a discursive formation and effect of a given version of representationalist politics. And the feminist subject turns out to be discursively constituted by the very political system that is supposed to facilitate its emancipation" (*Gender Trouble* 2). Thus, both Foucault and Butler develop analyses that interrogate what Karen Barad called representationalism, i.e., a thinking which separates ontologically disjoint domains of words and things, by suggesting performative alternatives (Barad 802, 804, 811).

Key to Butler's influential book *Gender Trouble* is her exploration of gender as a fluid construction separate from sex (Carter 368). Butler's definition of gender differentiates between gender, biological sex, and sexuality, arguing that these do not necessarily have to be connected. She contends that if "gender is the cultural meanings that a sexed body assumes, then a gender cannot be said to follow from sex in any one way" (*Gender Trouble* 6). Instead, Butler defines gender as a "repeated stylization of the body, a set of repeated acts within a rigid regulatory frame that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being" (*Gender Trouble* 33). In other words, gender is something that is repeatedly done and acted out, as a performance of what is considered to be gender-appropriate behavior, while ultimately remaining unfixed (Carter 368). Butler also thinks gender as a norm that can never be fully internalized, but rather remains phantasmatic (*Gender Trouble* 141).

By understanding identity as something that is done, i.e., produced through performativity, Butler calls the very category of "woman" into question. She argues that "woman itself is a term in process, a becoming, a constructing that cannot rightfully be said to originate or to end. As an ongoing discursive practice, it is open to invention and resignification" (*Gender Trouble* 33). Butler suggests that the concepts of man and woman are constructed within a heterosexual matrix of power (*Gender Trouble* 30). The latter is reiterated through a "sedimentation that over time has produced a set of corporeal styles which, in reified form, appear as the natural configuration of bodies into sexes existing in a binary relation to one another" (140). Her theorizations thus do away with both naturalized heteronormative binaries and feminist essentialism.

In addition to gender, Butler also reframes sex as a construct. Butler elaborates on the constructed nature of sex in her subsequent book *Bodies That Matter* (1993), where she theorizes sex in terms of interpellation. By "sex," Butler refers to one's sexed identity (Salih 77). Sex and the body are not a "mute facticity" (*Gender Trouble* 129), but rather performatively constituted:

> If the body signified as prior to signification is an effect of signification, then the mimetic or representational status of language, which claims that signs follow bodies as their necessary mirrors, is not mimetic at all. On the contrary, it is productive, constitutive, one might even argue performative, inasmuch as this signifying act delimits and contours the body that it claims to find prior to any and all signification. (*Bodies That Matter* 30)

Butler here contends that bodies have no pre-discursive existence, but rather are produced by discourse. Moreover, she reframes language's signifying acts as constitutive of bodies. Her thinking breaks with idea that bodies' materiality exists prior to signification through cultural inscriptions. She stresses that there can be no reference to the body that is not at the same time a further formation of that body (10).[6] For instance, in order to make a statement such as "this body is female," a speaker has to have acquired some knowledge of what these words mean, while the term delimits the body being referred to according to all of the connotations of the notion of "female" (Vasterling 20). This understanding of the body entails Butler's conception of what she calls the discursive limits of sex in the subtitle of her book: sex is attributed through a "founding interpellation" that shifts an infant from an "it" to a "she" or "he" (*Bodies That Matter* 7). Thus bodies are both sexed and gendered from the beginning of their existence, and always already discursively constructed.

Subjects assume their position in response to these interpellations. Butler argues that the symbolic power of the naming of the girl "governs the formation of a corporeally enacted femininity that never fully approximates the norm," addressing a "girl" who therefore is "compelled to 'cite' the norm in order to qualify for and remain a viable subject" (*Bodies That Matter* 232). The interpellation thus installs differences between men and women, compelling subjects to cite both sexual and gendered norms in order to qualify for subjecthood within the heterosexual matrix (Salih 89).

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[6] Butler's understanding of language use as performative constitution of the body builds on Austin's and Searle's formulations of performative speech acts.

Butler's definitions of gender as a "free-floating artifice" (*Gender Trouble* 6) and sex as an effect of interpellation open up the possibility of identities outside any binary organization. The non-fixed character of gender undermines binary concepts. Transgressive forms of behavior that cross the lines between gender concepts suggest that gender identities could be freely chosen and even multiple (Bryson 239). The citationality of sex and gender leaves room for subversion, which Butler discusses under the notion of re-citation: subversive practices cite heteronormative and binary gender concepts in ways that foreground their constructedness. Butler names drag and parody as possible forms of subversion, although these can also be used to enforce a "heterosexual economy that must constantly police its own boundaries against the invasion of queerness" (*Bodies That Matter* 126).

Since Butler's intervention, most feminist analyses of otherness have moved beyond the discussion of gender difference alone. Instead, contemporary scholars discuss gender in the context of broader critical studies of identity. Intersectionality has become one of the primary rubrics for theorizing difference in the past two decades, and is now a prevalent approach in feminism and queer theory: an intersectional approach considers forces such as race, class, sex, gender, and nation to be mutually co-constitutive, challenges mutually exclusive identity paradigms (Puar, "Assemblage Theory" 49, 51). Thus, intersectionality responds to universalizing tendencies in feminism, granting visibility to identities that remained unaddressed by previous feminist discourse primarily produced by white middle-class contributors. The approach acknowledges that among women, power is distributed unevenly and often along the lines of color, sexuality, and class (Carter 376). Furthermore, intersectionality considers normative ideals of whiteness, masculinity, youth, and health to characterize a dominant subject that excludes as other all that is viewed as deviant from these norms (Braidotti, “Anomalies” 526).

However, recent reconsiderations of the subject have called intersectional analyses of identity into question. Intersectionality, though focusing on configurations, still implies classifications, and thinks identities as timeless and stable. With its focus on representational politics, intersectionality reinvests in the humanist subject (Puar, “Assemblage Theory” 55). However, Butler’s writings herald a thinking about gender and the body that moves beyond constructivism, and thereby also beyond the idea of a seamless and stable identity. Whereas the constructivist model is based on the idea of a pre-discursive body that becomes involved in cultural inscriptions, finally relying on a binary understanding of materiality and discourse, Butler’s rearticulations of gender, sex, and the body assume that (pre-discursive) bodies are articulated only through discourse. Deconstructing the notion of the body as a natural, prelinguistic given (Vasterling 18), Butler paves the way for reconsiderations of the gendered body that do not presume any stable materiality outside cultural signification. These reconsiderations include the concept of the assemblage or that of a posthuman subjectivity shaped by technologies.

Within the context of the most recent considerations regarding gender and technology, the notion of the assemblage has gained particular significance. Deleuze and Guattari coin the notion of the assemblage in order to rethink difference in ways that have affected both feminism and reflections on technology.[7] They define the term as "every constellation of singularities and traits deducted from the flow—selected, organized, stratified—in such a way as to converge…artificially and naturally; an assemblage, in this sense, is a veritable invention" (*A Thousand Plateaus* 406). In contrast to the static undertones of the term of the constellation (Lethen, Pelz, and Rohrwasser 7), an assemblage remains dynamic. Assemblage refers to both the whole and the process of its creation through convergence Deleuze and Guattari describe. The concept of the assemblage is meant to apply to a wide variety of "wholes" encompassing heterogeneous elements (DeLanda 3). The notion recurs throughout the work of Deleuze and Guattari, but is most prominently discussed in *A Thousand Plateaus.* The fact that the notion of the assemblage appears dispersed throughout their work could be considered as a strategy to have the very notion of assemblage take the shape of one: the notion itself remains a non-totality always in the process of becoming. Accordingly, there is a tendency in scholarship on assemblages not to focus on hermeneutical discussions of Deleuzian writings, but rather to reconstruct the notion of the assemblage in order to cater to a wide variety of purposes. For instance, Manuel DeLanda, who draws on the concept of the assemblage to develop his philosophy of society, invites his readers to consider his take on Deleuze and Guattari to be a "neo-assemblage theory" (4).

For reconsiderations of both gender and technology, it is particularly significant that the notion of the assemblages disbands binary notions of body and environment. The assemblage is not an arrangement of stable elements. Dianne Currier, who explores Deleuzian body-technology assemblages from a feminist perspective, stresses that these elements have to be understood as "composites of unformed flows and partial fragments of information, matter, ideas, particles, movements and intensities, which coalesce into particular recognizable forms and functions within the context of particular assemblages" (328). This also counts for bodies, which are not understood as organic totalities anymore: bodies are not fixed unities, but rather in flux within their interactions with "circumstances, energies, fields of objects and discourses through which they find particular temporary articulations" (ibid). Thus, bodies are not self-identical, but multiplicities that encounter and interpenetrate other multiplicities within assemblages through linkage, exchange and connection (329). This makes bodies particular historical configurations articulated through various assemblages that include the possibility of becoming otherwise (334).

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[7] In U.S. academia, assemblage is used as the translation of Deleuze and Guattari's "agencement," which means layout, arrangement, and relations (Puar, "Assemblage Theory" 57).

Since each of its elements is constituted in its relations with all other objects, there is no originary moment in the assemblage. Thus, the concept of assemblage not only recasts the notion of the body, but also that of context: "the social" can no longer be understood as a pre-existing overarching structure into which elements are integrated. Rather, the "social" is equally assembled and does not precede the assemblages in which it encounters bodies (Curier 328).

Finally, Currier argues that the notion of the assemblage reorients feminist discourse on "woman":

> In a Deleuzian horizon, each instance or event of assembling produces a particular instantiation of 'woman', or femininity, in concert with the other elements of that assemblage, including technological formations. Feminist analysis would attend to the specificities of constituent elements – what forms of bodies, populations, technologies, practices are actualized, what flows of energy, intensities, speeds and slowness traverse the assemblage? (335)

Currier here suggests that assemblage theory grants feminist discourse new lines of investigation: femininity as an "object" of feminist analysis becomes local, as each of its instances is understood as only one particular instantiation. This involves matrices of power insofar as these relate to gender concepts. Accordingly, Currier suggests regarding masculinity:

> Rather than beginning with the assumption that power is at the disposal of the masculine, we need to examine specific assemblages to uncover how technologies and men are placed in proximity, how they are mutually configured in the process of assembling, what forms and function of the technological (and the masculine) are articulated within these specific assemblages and, further, what forms and functions of femininity also appear. (336)

Thus, any inquiry into gender would have to be local, understanding gender in terms of a historical and fluid configuration that does not exist prior to and independent from its constitution in relation with technologies, contexts, objects, and further assemblages.

Jasbir Puar draws on the notion of the assemblage in order to reconsider intersectional reflections on identity. She understands the idea of intersectional identities as the "byproducts of attempts to still…the perpetual motion of assemblages" (*Terrorist Assemblages*, 213). Puar develops her notion of the assemblage by building on Deleuze's term:

> The Deleuzian assemblage, a series of dispersed but mutually implicated networks, draws together enunciation and dissolution, causality and effect. As opposed to an intersectional model of identity, which presumes that components

> —race, class, gender, sexuality, nation, age, religion—are separable analytics and can thus be disassembled, an assemblage is more attuned to interwoven forces that merge and dissipate time, space, and body against linearity, coherency, and permanency. Intersectionality demands the knowing, naming, and thus stabilizing of identity across space and time, relying on the logic of equivalence and analogy between various axes of identity and generating narratives of progress that deny the fictive and performative aspects of identification: you become an identity, yes, but also timelessness works to consolidate the fiction of a seamless stable identity in every space. (“Queer Assemblages,” 127-128)

Puar here contrasts assemblages’ instability and mobility with intersectionality’s implication of stable identities: intersectionality implies the stability of socially constructed parts of identity across time and space, whereas assemblages implying in-between spaces and movement within assemblages (Stachowiak 4-5). However, Puar also seeks to mediate between both approaches. Her reflections respond in part to feminist scholars involved in technology studies and posthuman discourse, who argue that the liminality of bodily matter cannot be captured with intersectional thinking, consider bodies to be unstable entities, and abandon the division between matter and discourse (“Assemblage Theory” 56).[8] Finally, Puar's work seeks to integrate intersectional feminist theory and posthuman or postsubject conceptualizations of the body (“Assemblage Theory” 51).

Assemblage theory’s focus on relations entails new perspectives on difference. According to Puar, the notion of the assemblage as one that refers to a collection of items and the fact of assembling, deprivileging for instance the human body as a discrete organic entity. Categories such as gender, sexuality, and race are considered actions and encounters between bodies rather than attributes of subjects, shifting the focus from entities to patterns of relations within which entities are arranged with each other (Puar, "Assemblage Theory" 57-58, 60). For instance, by drawing on Puar's work, Dana Stachowiak's qualitative study of genderqueer identities frames gender as becoming: in the case of genderqueerness, identity is continuously negotiated in relation to social constructions of gender on the one hand and what she calls a felt sense of (deviant) gender on the other (5). Stachowiak suggests that this gender as becoming in terms of a simultaneous identifying and disidentifying from the social constructs, a "moving freely within/ out of the binary," applies to all individuals; genderqueer individuals, however, are more aware of their in-betweenness in everyday experiences due to their critical consciousness of self and identity (4).

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[8] One of these scholars is Donna Haraway, whose contemplation of the cyborg I discuss below.

Puar's reconsideration—and reconfiguration—of the subject takes part in a contemporary tendency to re-evaulate the idea of the "human." In the late 20th and early 21st centuries, the dissolution of the boundaries of the human subject has become a critical concern in both European and Anglo-American contexts, destabilizing and interrogating the human subject in Western civilization (Damlé 303). The critical attention for the relations between humans and "others" such as animals, plants, or technologies has formed a discourse that refers to itself as posthuman. The new role of technology in the reformulation of human subjectivity under the notion of the posthuman has also brought about new interventions in gender and technology. Reflections on gender that refer to their position as posthuman depart from a discussion of technological innovation. In general, the notion of the posthuman approach has come to designate a loosely related set of recent attempts to reconceptualize the relationship between technology and the conditions of human embodiment (Asberg 9).

Interestingly enough, allusions to technology's relevance to gender identities are already inscribed in documents of the early days of the computer age. In the history of thought on the relation between humans and technology, Alan Turing's famous "imitation game" has become a seminal reflection on intelligence. In his classic 1950 paper "Computer Machinery and Intelligence," Turing presents an experimental set-up: alone in a room with two computer terminals, a person was supposed to interact with these terminals to address invisible entities with questions in an effort to find out with whom or what the person was communicating. In the example that became famous as one of the founding moments of the computer age, the goal of the participant was to find out which terminal was displaying the responses of a human, and which one was showing the answers of a machine. As Hayles comments, in this experiment the "erasure of embodiment was performed so that 'intelligence' becomes a property of the formal manipulation of symbols rather than enaction of the human life-world." What mattered instead of the presence of bodies was the generation of informational patterns that could enact humans (xi).

In her introduction to her book *How We Became Posthuman*, Hayles refreshes readers' memories of a second example of the "imitation game" presented by Turing. Strikingly, Turing presented another version, in which the task was not to distinguish human from machine, but a man from a woman. Hayles stresses that this gender-oriented imitation game was historically disregarded, so that Andrew Hodges's biography of

Turing does away with it as “one of the few passages of the paper that was not expressed with perfect lucidity,” reassuring readers that “gender depended on facts which were not reducible to sequences of symbols” (415). Hayles, however, reads this second version of the experiment involving a man and a woman as a lead regarding the question: what do gendered bodies have to do with the erasure of embodiment and the merging of machine and human intelligence (xii)? “By including gender,” Hayles suggests, “Turing implied that renegotiation of the boundary between human and machine would involve more than transforming the question of ‘who can think’ into ‘what can think.’ It would also bring into question other characteristics of the liberal subject, for it made the crucial move of distinguishing between the enacted body, present in the flesh on one side of the computer screen, and the represented body, produced through the verbal and semiotic markers constituting an electronic environment” (xiii). Hayles here suggests that what she distinguishes as the enacted and the represented body is no longer necessarily connected; rather, this connection is a contingent production mediated by technology that becomes part of identity.

The transgression of the boundaries of the Western human subject as defined since the Enlightenment is at the center of posthuman discourse. In the humanist tradition, subjectivity is equated with consciousness, rationality, and self-regulating ethical behavior; however, this concepts also defines “otherness,” creating sexualized, racialized, and naturalized others of less than human status (Braidotti 15). Braidotti points out that second-wave feminism builds on humanist principles, criticizing masculinist universalism by positing a common grounding among women in terms of a being-women-in-the-world (21-22). Post-structuralism, however, called into question the liberal individualistic view of the subject. Rather, post-structuralist thinkers reframed this subject ideal as a historically and culturally specific discourse formation (Braidotti 24). Moreover, feminist critiques such as those by bell hooks and Luce Irigaray pointed out that the ideal of Man inscribes a subject that is male, white, European, and able-bodied. Posthuman discourse similarly departs from an understanding of "the human" as a specific mode of being human that has been transposed into a standard that is posited in opposition to both sexualized and racialized others as well as technological artifacts (26). Thus, this school of thought shares with poststructuralist feminism a rejection of implicit assumptions about the human subject upheld by the humanist image of Man (30), whereas feminism focused on internal complexities within categories such as "woman" and others (27). Hayles defines the posthuman as a point of view characterized by the following key assumptions about subjectivity:

> First, the posthuman view privileges informational pattern over material instantiation . . . . Second, . . . [it] considers consciousness, regarded as the seat of human identity in the Western tradition…as an epiphenomenon, as an evolutionary upstart trying to claim that it is the whole show when in actuality it is only a minor shadow. Third, . . . [it] thinks of the body as the original prosthesis we all learn to manipulate, so that extending or replacing the body with other prostheses becomes a continuation of the process that began before we were born. Forth, . . . the posthuman view configures human being so that it can be seamlessly articulated with intelligent machines. (*Posthuman* 2-3)

Hayles first and fourth remark could be considered to make up the bottom line of Turing's experiment; the second one addresses the renegotiation of the Western subject, and the third remark points to cyborg discourse. Doing away with the idea of a "natural" self, the posthuman subject is a "material-information entity": as a collection of heterogeneous components across which posthuman cognition is distributed, the boundaries of the posthuman subjects undergo "continuous construction and reconstruction" (3).

This idea of posthuman subjects as informational patterns that undergo ongoing (re)construction has implications for gender. Butler and de Lauretis frame gender as an effect of ongoing processes of (re)construction. Hence, as the posthuman view suggests that technology shapes the informational pattern that makes the posthuman subject, technology might potentially shift at any time the participation in existing gender concepts or offer new ones.

A possible example of posthuman subjectivity, the figure of the cyborg became one of the most prominent figures in feminist reflections on technology. As a hybrid figure, the cyborg lends itself to the discussion of boundaries and the constructed character of otherness. Along with cybernetics' redefinition of the body as an informational system, the idea of a posthuman, distributed cognition disrupts the boundaries of the human body (Hayles 84-85). The cyborg literally fuses cybernetic device and biological organism, creating a "boundary figure" belonging to both the organic and the technological or cultural (Balsamo 5).

One of the founding texts of the feminist interest in cyborgs is Donna Haraway's "A Manifesto for Cyborgs" (1985, reworked in 1991), which made Haraway the critical thinker most commonly associated with technological discourses on subjectivity grounded in feminist concerns (Damlé 305). In her "manifesto," Haraway introduces the figure of the cyborg in order to build an "ironic political myth" that addresses both feminism and socialism. Her cyborg is "a cybernetic organism, a hybrid of machine and organism, a creature of social reality as well as a creature of fiction" (291) that is a "creature in a post-gender world" (292). For Haraway, the cyborg's hybridity sets "the stage on which are performed contestations about the body boundaries that have often marked class, ethnic, and cultural differences" (85).[9] Through this "cyborg myth," Haraway addresses the breakdowns of various boundaries towards the end of the 20th century upon which the idea of human uniqueness rests, including the boundary between organism and machine, according to which the latter lacked autonomy and the ability of self-designing and self-developing (which provided supposed certainty about what counts as nature) (293-294). Haraway's writing is informed by the non-innocence of the category "woman" as construct of discourses that have been contested by the end of the 20th century.[10]

The cyborg's techno-body resists central Western myths. It disturbs the "natural order" simply by being manufactured and not born, resisting the myth of origins created by Western humanism (Damlé 305, Braidotti, "All Too Human" 202): as a configuration of organism and machine, it evades traditional humanist concepts of women as childbearer and raiser, of individuality and individual wholeness, and the heterosexual marriage-nuclear family just as much as insistence upon consistency and completeness (Keen n. pag).

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[9] Haraway thinks science fiction and social reality are connected: both lived experience and imagination intersect in the figure of the cyborg as a fiction mapping social reality. Haraway's "manifesto" seeks to contribute to post-feminist theory and culture, as well as a utopian tradition of imagining a world without gender (292).

[10] Rather, she notes that "identities seem contradictory, partial and strategic": due to their social and historical constitution, "gender, race, and class cannot provide the basis for belief in 'essential' unity," so that "there is nothing about being 'female' that naturally binds women" (295).

Haraway also mobilizes the figure of the cyborg in order to criticize dualisms. Among the dualisms that she claims are persistent in Western traditions are self/other, mind/body, culture/nature, male/female, active/passive, civilized/primitive, and reality/appearance. These are problematic for they have been "systemic to… the practices of domination of women, people of colour, nature, workers, animals—in short, domination of all constituted as others, whose task is to mirror the self" (313). In the words of Braidotti, Haraway frames the cyborg as a hybrid and "connection-making entity; a figure of interrelationality, receptivity and global communication that deliberately blurs categorical distinctions" ("All Too Human" 200). Haraway embraces the breakdowns of distinctions between organism and machine as well as similar dualisms as a suspension of the structure of the "Western self": these breakdowns, she argues, suspend "the matrices of domination" and phallogocentrism (311). According to Haraway, ontological dualisms are challenged since it is not clear who creates and who is created within the changed relation between human and machine, giving rise to a contemporary sense of connectivity (313).

Finally, Haraway calls for a cyborg theory, using the figure of the cyborg to reflect on the very practice of theorization. "Race, gender and capital require a cyborg theory of wholes and parts. There is no drive in cyborgs to produce total theory, but there is an intimate experience of boundaries, their construction and deconstruction" (316). While arguing against any "totalizing," encompassing theory, she also takes a stance against demonology of science and technology. Rather, she reads the cyborg as an image of feminist potential as it helps transgress dualisms that had previously explained bodies. Speaking with Haraway, this chapter is invested in building a cyborg theory, reconfiguring gender and media theorizations across times and fields in an effort to illuminate the dissecting force of adaptation.

Despite Haraway's anti-dualist program, the figure of the cyborg also allows for different readings. Against the backdrop of the notion of the assemblage, Puar reviews critical concerns about Haraway's cyborg myth: although the cyborg is supposed to blur binary categories, it "inhabits the intersection of body and technology" (Puar, "Assemblage Theory" 56). Puar draws on Dianne Currier, who suggests that the cyborg's hybrid body ends up leaving the categories involved in the human-machine dualism largely intact, reinscribing the cyborg into a binary logic of identity (323). The cyborg's hybridity is defined against the unity of the previous categories (Kirby 147). Thus, Currier argues, transformation does not lead to any radically new configurations; rather, it is short-circuited so that emerging configurations are explicable only in terms of difference *from* preceding forms (Currier 324).

Some gender-focused discussions of the cyborg attempt to account for the impact of technological innovation on gender concepts. In her study *Technologies of the Gendered Body: Reading Cyborg Women*, Anne Balsamo builds on Haraway's discussion of the cyborg in order to frame the gendered body as a "hybrid construction of materiality and discourse" (12). Thus, the cyborg becomes an opportunity to address both material and discursive coordinates of gender. Balsamo interrogates the effects that technological developments have on cultural enactments of gender and suggests: “The widespread technological refashioning of the “natural” body suggests that gender too would be ripe for reconstruction” (9). However, her analyses of practices and representations or “body technologies” show that contemporary discourses of technology often guard gender boundaries, sustaining gender as a naturalized marker of human identity: cosmetic surgery, for instance, reproduces the meaningfulness of gender identity; virtual cyberspace, though promising a stage for the performance of bodily transcendence, is a space where traditional gender identities are reproduced (160-161). Thus, popular contemporary “techno-bodies” often end up reifying discrete gender identities (159).

Both the dualism behind cyborg myth and the techno-bodies in popular culture suggest limitations of the cyborg myth and stress advantages of the notion of the assemblage. The idea of an identity beyond dualisms was in part pioneered by Haraway with the concept of the cyborg, but is more elaborated in the notion of the assemblage, as configurations remain fluid, in motion, and outside the dichotomies of the organic and inorganic. However, the figure of the cyborg and posthuman provide the focus on technology necessary to account for the fact that our interactions with media and other technologies have multiplied in the recent decades. By temporarily but frequently forming assemblages with users, media suggest that we, who previously considered ourselves to be independent subjects, are actually serial momentary cyborgs. Though always in becoming and never stable, assembling with an unlimited variety of locations, partners, and intensities, technology has taken a center stage in our acts of assembling. We might do well not to do away with the figure of the cyborg altogether.

Against the backdrop of contemporary assemblage theory, I now revisit earlier theorizations of gender. Popular manifestations of gender make us recognize fluid assemblages—arrangements of bodies, spaces, affects—as involving “woman” and “man.” Borrowing from film theory’s vocabulary, one could say that popular narrative media’s assemblages follow an “invisible style”—namely one that conceals their connectivity, fluidity, and instability in favor of recasting “man” and “woman” within a traditional matrix of separated domains of power. And so we end up with the necessity of saying “man” and “woman” when speaking about gender in films and literature, contributing to some extent to the discursive constitution of binaries while pointing these out.

For instance, the concepts of both gender performativity and the technology of gender shed new light on media’s share in gender construction. Judith Butler’s and Teresa de Lauretis’s accounts of gender matter for a discussion of gender across media in so far as they criticize the relationship between the gaze, gender, sexuality, and desire assumed in earlier theorizations such as Mulvey’s. Whereas the concept of a male gaze implies the naturalness with which masculinity (as a gender concept) and heterosexual desire are linked to the male body (which should even bear quotation marks if read alongside Butler), both de Lauretis and Butler stress the discursive constitution of gender, and in the case of Butler also of sex. In de Lauretis's reflections, narrative is in so far a “technology of gender” as it articulates a subject in which the male body, heterosexual desire, Oedipal expectations, and stereotypical masculinity are intertwined and reiterated in a way that has their interconnection appear to be “natural.” If we set aside the subject assumed by the psychoanalytic understanding of identification in de Lauretis (and Mulvey), her analysis of narrative can be approached in terms of Deleuzian assemblage theory (on which I will elaborate in the next sub-chapter): I suggest that traditional narrative reiterates specific assemblages in which "man" is configured in a way that articulates specific forms and functions of the "masculine," while in the process of assembling, specific forms and functions of "femininity" also appear. De Lauretis specifies these forms and functions as a binary constellation of "man" as subject (characterized by activity, ambition, subjectivity, change) on the one hand, and space and "woman" as non-man on the other hand.

1.5 Adaptation and Narrative

Early cinema developed narrative fiction as the institutional mode of the medium. A basic trajectory of the classical Hollywood ideal, which was also taken on by Germany's UFA and other national film industries, soon involved a cause-and-effect logic, a clear subject-object relation, and a cohesive effect of visual and auditory perception aimed at providing a story (Schmidt n. pag., par. 20). Cinema's "narrativization" (Gunning 233) took place from 1907 to about 1913 through the structural organization of cinematic signifiers and the "creation of a self-enclosed diegetic universe" (Gunning 233, Schmidt n. pag., par. 20). Ever since, mainstream film productions have heavily drawn on a normative narrative logic in the spirit of Aristotle that is still manifest today in neo-Aristotelian guide books for screenwriting such as Syd Field's *Screenplay* (1979) or Robert McKee's *Story* (1997): the role of various characters is usually defined in terms of the action, while the latter is commonly structured into acts and plot points that move the story forward. "Know your ending!" is Field's famous guideline for future screenwriters. In other words, mainstream cinema expresses an underlying narrative grammar in which causal sequences of events are oriented towards closure, supported by cinematographic techniques of narrative organization such as continuity editing.

Various voices in the field of literature and film have suggested that narrative fiction in cinema originated in literature. As Robert B. Ray writes: "The whole enterprise of continuity rested on film's rapprochement with literature, especially with narrative prose fiction [of the 19th century], whose enigmas, forward momentum, and psychological coherence motivate, and thereby conceal, all rhetorical machinery" (43). Fictional film thereby can be considered as recasting and continuing pre-cinematic narrative practices in terms of a shared "enterprise"; the latter is pursued by means of a concealed "rhetorical machinery," meaning that literary or cinematic mechanics remain largely invisible in favor of the motivation of the events.

Narrative thereby forms a binding tie between the media of cinema and literature in various ways. By partaking in what Ray calls the "enterprise of continuity," the institutional modes of literature and cinema share the same traditional grounds. Despite all technical and material differences between the merely verbal medium of text and the audio-visual multi-track medium of film, narrative is a semiotic system available to both media (Andrew 34), since in both media, groups of signs are presented and apprehended consecutively (Cohen 92).

Consequently, the process of adaptation from narrative novel to film is mostly organized around the transfer of narrative units: a selection of characters, events, and milieu from the literary text are written into the screenplay. Accordingly, adaptation studies often focus on questions surrounding the modifications of the story, leading Robert Stam to suggest studying adaptation in terms of what he calls comparative narratology:

> The issue becomes one of comparative narratology, which asks such questions as the following. What events from the novel's story have been eliminated, added, or changed in the adaptation, and, more important, why? . . . Adaptations today typically still trim down the 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. ("Theory and Practice of Adaptation" 34)

My analysis will not mainly be looking for what "events" have been "eliminated, added, or changed" in the process of adaptation; rather, my explorations are dedicated to adaptations that present media-conscious responses to literary texts of highly reflexive character that break with linear narrative. Due to adaptation's standard practice of narrative transfer, adaptations of texts that do not have a proper plot are particularly marked. The main binding ties in such adaptations are not limited to "events"; instead, my discussions will center on adaptation as a response on the formal level, meaning that it is aesthetic strategies that create correspondence between the media objects involved. In this manner, I seek to reach beyond the reading of texts and films in terms of "comparative narratology." Rather, I propose that the adaptation of media-critical material challenges conventional adaptation's readability along the lines of comparative narratology.

Given the relations that I highlighted between narrative, adaptation, and gender, we can complement Robert Stam's reading of Spike Jonze's film "Adaptation." He discusses the film in the theoretical introductory chapter to his collection *Literature and Film: A Guide to the Theory and Practice of Film Adaptation*. The 2002-film is labeled as an adaptation of the non-fiction book *The Orchid Thief* (1998) by Susan Orlean, which is based on a feature that she wrote for *The New Yorker* (1995) about John Laroche, a flower collector who illegally poached wild orchids. As Stam stresses, the events in the film center on writers working on their writing, including the writer of *The Orchid Thief* and the screenwriter who is attempting to adapt it into a screenplay for a fictional feature film. Stam draws on Jonze's *Adaptation* in support of his rehabilitation and reinvention of adaptation studies, reading the film as an adaptation about adaptation that foregrounds the writing process to remind spectators that film is a form of writing that borrows from other forms of writing ("Theory and Practice of Adaptation" 1). Stam spells out the wide variety of metaphors that the film develops for the adaptational process, including "novel and adaptation as twins like [the film characters] Don and Charlie, or adaptations as parasites, as hybrids, or adaptations as evidencing split personality, or as demonstrating the interdependence of species or genres" (ibid. 2). In an effort to argue against "fidelity discourse," Stam concludes that Jonze's *Adaptation* involves these metaphors in order to call up the question of how we speak about adaptation from novel to film (ibid. 3).

In order to consider adaptation's self-reflexive potential, it is worth specifying on the screenwriter's struggles in Jonze's *Adaptation.* Screenwriter Charlie Kaufman (named after the actual writer of the screenplay for Jonze's *Adaptation*), speaks with fascination about Orlean's "musings" in *The Orchid Thief*, and announces to the studio executive in the film: "I'd want to remain true to that, let the movie exist rather than be artificially plot driven," whereas the studio executive suggests that the female journalist and the male renegade should fall in love in the film version (*Adaptation*). Although he first stresses that he does not want to introduce dramatic action such as car chases, drug dramas, or character changes, but rather just show "how amazing flowers are," all of these things finally happen towards the end of *Adaptation* and, as the film insinuates, also find their way into his (fictional) script. Kaufman's struggle at first is one for fidelity, led by the idea that there is some sort of essential quality of the text to which he could remain true; more interestingly, however, his struggle is one with the adaptation of a text that is not plot-driven into the Hollywood system that requires plot-driven narrative grammar.

Furthermore, I suggest, the question of plot is framed as one of gender in Jonze's *Adaptation.* Kaufman's writer's block and his uptightness when interacting with women are shown to be inextricably intertwined in the film—e.g., through voice-over streams-of-consciousness that associate his worries about his physical appearance with his insecurities about his creativity and intellectual originality. Both problems are concomitantly resolved after receiving some backslapping and fatherly advice on writing by screenplay guru Robert McKee (Brian Cox): when McKee assures him that there is no mismatch between life and Hollywood writing, Kaufman finishes the script, and has the courage to approach his love interest at the ostentatiously formulaic end of *Adaptation*. Thus, the Hollywood writer does not only tell but rather enacts the hero's journey.

Finally, the film gives an account of Hollywood adaptation as the molding of authorial voices to cultural norms. The film suggests that Susan Orlean's book and the authorial "voice" that it conveys becomes a prop of Kaufman's desire: her voice-over accompanies his reading sessions and finally inspires him to masturbate to his fantasies of her attention and care. The lack of plot in her meditative text provides a "feminine space" that attracts Kaufman before he begins regretting his decision to write a (faithful) adaptation (Rizzo 302). After speaking with McKee, however, Kaufman spies on author Susan Orlean only to observe her having an affair and consuming drugs with John, the protagonist of her non-fiction book.

Thus, Kaufman makes the female author his object of investigation, observing her in what Silverman called a quasi extradiegetic space, and making her the object of his authorial narration. He finally becomes the hero of his story by escaping attacks by Susan and John as well as a car chase, not without learning a life-changing lesson from his twin brother that finally helps Charlie win over his love interest. By means of adaptation, Orlean's text, meaning her authorial voice that initially posed an obstacle to Kaufman's artistic and erotic aspirations, is finally contained within an Oedipal trajectory as described by de Lauretis—a hero's journey, driven by ambition, in which Woman appears as obstacle (Orlean and her writing) and as a reward (Charlie's love interest). By adapting Orlean's flow-like meditations into a dramatic story, and turning the female author into a character within his text, he strips her voice of its authorial quality, relocating her within diegesis; there, he can oversee and -hear her, while his voice becomes the authorial one. Thus, both of the writers' authorial voices shift throughout the film (and process of) *Adaptation* and are made to fit Hollywood's narrative grammar and gender binaries.

In Jonze's *Adaptation*, the practice of adaptation is shown to be one that molds subject positions according to Western Oedipal trajectories and gendered ideas of authorship. McKee's assurance that this was the most appropriate account of "real life" is undermined by the very tracing of the process of adaptation, which exposes the normative character of his narrative grammar and the erotic dimension of writers' adherence to it. Over-the-top, kitschy moments of reconciliation (such as Charlie's conversations with McKee and his dying brother), in addition to comedic and ironic undertones of the depiction of Charlie, stress a satirical quality of the film. By disclosing adaptation from meditative text to plot-driven story and exposing it to satire, the film implies that a reversal of this process is possible: if adaptation can work to suppress the plurality of authors' voices to Hollywood's story of what counts as "real life," then adaptation could also be used to tackle this idea of "real life" by reversing this translation: formerly plot-driven material could be subjected to a process of adaptation that dissolves their narrative structures; adaptation would then create texts that entail alternative writer and reader/ viewer positions that still refer back to their formulaic counterparts.

The critical adaptation practice I map out takes the position of a counter-adaptation. These adaptations allows us to reflect on the predominance of narrative fiction in both the media systems involved in the adaptation as well as in the very practice of traditional adaptation as a transfer of narrative units. Though reflexive texts form the focus of my research, I do not contend that adaptations of such texts were common. Rather, adaptation's (and adaptation studies's) standard practice is that of comparative narratology. But I do contend that my analysis of gender in contemporary adaptation practice will promote our understanding of intermedial relationships, the construction of subjectivity, and the shifting of these stakes in the digital age, and will thereby advance adaptation studies both in the broader context of comparative new media studies and the analysis of gendered subjectivity and the media landscape.

1.6 Contemporary Media, Adaptation, and Subjectivity

New Screens, New Screenings

We have to revisit the study of film and literature in—and from the viewpoint of—the digital age. Innovation in communication technology changed our relationship with screens as interfaces, made flexible spectatorship, and established a wide variety of intermedial configurations: the graphical user interface of our computers has a text or image in one window meet other texts and images in other windows, introducing a new visual system (Friedberg 2). Narrative cinema and literature are not the dominant mass media anymore; rather, communication for various purposes such as work or entertainment revolves around the screens of computers and mobile devices. In today's user experience, interactive screens of computers and mobile devices contrast with both literature's stipulated navigation and cinema's screen that, though "dynamic" thanks to moving images (Manovich 97), is unresponsive to spectators' actions, forming a boundary between spectators and the observed world. We have to ask: how do we experience cinema and literature in an age where the dominant forms of mass communication are digital? What do we learn from new media for watching film and reading literature—how do we read and see differently? And what can we learn from new media studies for studying film and literature? Therefore, I seek to reframe adaptation studies within 21st-century comparative media studies.

In her latest book *How We Think: Digital Media and Contemporary Technogenesis* (2012), N. Katherine Hayles suggests that we account for our changing relationship with different media types in the digital age by institutionalizing the field of Comparative Media Studies. Hayles describes a shift from the "Age of Print" to that of digital media, exploring primarily the implications of the fact that teaching and research in traditionally print-based academic disciplines are moving into digital media (1-2). Comparative Media Studies are supposed to respond to the need for "approaches that can locate digital work within print traditions, and print traditions within digital media, without obscuring or failing to account for the differences between them" (7). According to Hayles, previous comparative inquiries, e.g. comparisons of manuscript and print cultures, or oral versus literature cultures, have existed at the margins of literary studies without any overall conceptual frameworks (ibid.). The field of Comparative Media Studies, however, through a "foregrounding of media technologies in comparative contexts, provides theoretical, conceptual, and practical frameworks for critically assessing technogenetic changes [i.e. interdependent changes in humans and technology] and devising strategies to help guide them in socially constructive ways" (14).

Hayles argues that new media highlight the characteristics of previous ones. Her discussion is mainly invested in the shift from print to digital media due to her focus on the study of literature, therefore omitting the discussion of pre-digital screen media such as cinema. Hayles writes on some of the effects on the aforementioned shift: “Print is no longer the default mode into which one falls without much thought about alternatives but rather an informed choice made with full awareness of its possibilities and limitations” (9). Hayles’s idea is that of a denaturalizing effect of media innovation on previous communicative practices.

Transposed onto my analysis, this idea of a denaturalizing effect of new media can also inform the study of literature, film—and that of adaptation. Digital alternatives to narrative strategies of the novel and the fiction film changed our relationship with these narrative practices, and challenge us to contemplate the differences between all of the media forms available. In order to shed new light on adaptation’s place within the contemporary media landscape, we will have to ask how media innovation might have denaturalized any characteristics of adaptation while changing spectators’ experiences with the media involved. I suggest that since adaptation is a practice largely relying on literature and film, whose conventional mode is that of narrative transfer, it is predestined to reflect on the denaturalizing effects that the late 20st- and in the 21st-century media landscape has on narrative literature and film. Readers and viewers find themselves at a different place in history relative to their precursors, facing paper pages and movie screens while spending most of their time with interactive interfaces that pervade their daily lives. In order to explore any consequences for the contemporary place of adaptation in today's Western culture, I will first further discuss specific aspects of what I have called a paradigmatic shift in communication and possibly in the status of linear realist narrative.

Media innovation has fostered new histories and definitions of the screen. Scholars such as Lev Manovich and Anne Friedberg have presented such accounts that understand paintings as pre-modern screens in order to discuss how computer screens both continue and challenge the tradition of the screen. Following these leads, I understand print literature's page to be just as much of a screen as electronic displays of literature in the following sense: although displays of literary texts do not frame immediately present virtual space, they provide a display for the writing to appear from which the virtual space then must be generated through reading.

Changing screens mean changing subjects—and may finally require us to change the subject altogether, i.e., to revise the very idea of the subject. As the act of framing implies a subject, we will also have to discuss how the subject is affected, or rather constructed, by how the world is framed. "Vision itself has a history" (Wölfflin 11)—and Anne Friedberg suggests that in this history of vision, Western contemporary culture is experiencing a shift in which digital imaging and display technologies made the "multiple-screen" a daily lens (4). In her book *The Virtual Window: From Alberti to Microsoft* (2006), Friedberg highlights how digital media and their screens have remodeled the visual syntax of the screen since the early 1990s: digital displays began to include multiple "windows," meaning that they involve multiple perspectives within a single frame; the computer screen as interface made this new visual system a daily lens

(2-3). Today, we are used to encountering texts or images that meet other texts and images within one and the same frame. Screens are fractured into nested sub-screens. Both the feminist suspicion against subject positions in media, and the posthuman turning-away from the idea of the subject allow us to reconsider the historicity of vision with an interest in gender. The history of vision is also one of media engaging users as subjects through signifying practices that map "a social vision into subjectivity" (de Lauretis, "Desire in Narrative" 39) and suggest categories of difference.

By integrating current discussions on print versus digital media (Hayles 2012) with those on images across different screen media (Manovich 2002, Friedberg 2006), I seek to pursue my comparative interest in literature, film, and digital media in the context of this dissertation to discuss both literature's and cinema's place in contemporary screen culture. Due to my interest in revisiting narrative tradition in the digital age, my concept of the screen does not primarily revolve around the distinction between visual and non-visual representation (in the form of literature and cinema). Rather, I center on the presence or absence of real-time representation, interactivity, and fragmentation as distinctive features of digital screens versus displays in cinema and print media: these traits have been brought about by digital media and effected, as I contend, a denaturalization of the integrity of narrative space and time that was inscribed in cinema and print media in the form of displays that are immutable to their users.

As the 20th century ended, digital media provided new systems of circulation for films and texts, embedding them outside their "originary visual systems" (Friedberg 6). Thereby, digitization in production, display, and delivery options including the streaming of video and audio content to some extent have blurred the "predigital/digital divide": for instance, previously non-digital media such as cinema are now involved with digital production and distribution, suggesting uncertain convergences in the near future (7). Friedberg suggests that the multiple-screen format marks a paradigm shift in visual address, requiring critical inquiry to reconsider the subject and our descriptors for a multiple, simultaneous, shiftable sense of time and space (ibid., 3). In order to deal with fictional narrative content, we will then have to consider the implications of technological innovation for the subject positions implied by media as well as the experience of spectators. The construction of the reader/viewer/user as implied subject might shift just as much as the depiction of characters within fiction.

In the context of my analysis of narrative tradition, the multiple screen matters insofar as it can be considered to contribute to a decline of the hegemony of realist linear narrative. Visual media before the digital age primarily used single-frame screens, filling the panel with the impression of one consistent, illusionary narrative space; split screens were an exception. Spectators were expected to focus on the representation while disregarding the space outside the frame (Manovich 96) as "ontological cut" (Stoichita 30). Framing within the frame, however, finally points to the frame of the screen: the ontological cut marked by the frame of the screen, which is supposed to lie outside attention, comes back into the picture. In the films that I discuss, variations on the multiple-screen blur this ontological cut in so far as these suggest the ability of film characters to interact with screens in terms of an interface through which characters can manipulate their own representation.

Another aspect of digital media that contributed to the paradigmatic shift in communication lies in their relationship with the body of the user. Focusing on changes in the engagement of users' bodies and their space, Lev Manovich draws a genealogy of the screen in which he differentiates between the classical, the dynamic, and the real-time screen in his book *The Language of New Media* (2002). While Manovich focuses on image content, his terminology can just as well contribute to any discussion of changes in reading texts, since, as discussed above, he defines the classical screen as a flat, rectangular surface that acts as a window into a virtual space, displaying a static image which usually has a scale different from that of the space of the user (95, 103). Dynamic screens retain most of these qualities while being able to show content changing over time, e.g., the screens of cinema and television. Manovich contends that cinema brought about an "era of the dynamic screen" (97), whereas the prevalent splitting of the screen in the digital age "allows us today to recognize it as a cultural category and begin to trace its history" (98) from a contemporary perspective. Manovich's thoughts resemble N. Katherine Hayles's aforementioned reconsideration of the "Age of Print" (2012, 9) in that they both highlight how in the digital age, the declining predominance of print media, cinema, and TV screens underlines these media's historicity.

The real-time screen is the prevalent type of screen in the digital age. Its image (or displayed content) can be updated in real time, e.g. any changes in the referent of images or in the data in the computer's memory can be reflected immediately (99). Therefore, the real-time screen shows the present (103). The real-time screen allows for interactivity: users can interfere with what appears on the screen by touching areas either directly or mediated through buttons or through clicks on a mouse or touchpad. Among the possibilities introduced by real-time representation is Virtual Reality, i.e. representational spaces where screens disappear as representation and the "human world" become continuous, requiring the viewer to physically move in order to perceive new content (110, 112, 114). In my analysis, however, Virtual Reality (VR) plays only a subordinate role. Although it is intriguing to assume VR's potential to denaturalize the boundary between representation and its outside, VR has not become a cultural force (yet?), meaning that its significance is not comparable to that of digital screens in today's society.

In my endeavor to re-evaluate the significance of narrative to subjectivity in today's media landscape, the real-time character and interactivity of digital screens matters just as much as the aforementioned multiple-frame format. Narrative has required and shaped media set-ups that maintain the illusion of a consistent fictional time and space (for instance, the "invisible style" in cinema). Interactivity, however, causes two states of both the subject and the screen to coexist: it forces the subject to "oscillate between the roles of viewer and user" (Manovich 207-210), while the screen alternates between the dimensions of representation and control (ibid. 208). While the oscillation between different mindsets might be particularly palpable in the case of computer games, which switch between illusionary and interactive segments (210), Manovich argues that it is typical of modern computer culture in general:

> At one moment, the user might be analyzing quantitative data; the next, using a search engine, then starting a new application, or navigating through space in a computer game; next perhaps, using a search engine again, and so on. In fact, the

> modern HCI [human-computer-interface] that allows the user to run a number of programs at the same time and keep a number of windows open on the screen at once posits multitasking as the social and cognitive norm. This multitasking demands from the user "cognitive multitasking"—rapidly alternating between different kinds of attention, problem solving, and other cognitive skills. (210)

Manovich here contends that cognitive multitasking has become the norm. Although he draws different conclusions, this new norm matters to narrative insofar as it challenges the illusionary quality of narrative media through the engagement of the user.

Against this backdrop, we might well challenge popular complaints about a loss of attention that derives from the use of digital media. Let us imagine the contemporary subjects outside the terms of a shortcoming: constructed through their every-day engagement with multi-fractured interactive screen, they are strangely underchallenged by the screens of cinema and print media. If screens create subjects through social vision, new screens create new subjects. I have argued that a new divide runs through the media landscape of the 21st century that denaturalized the screens of print literature and cinema. Consequently, previous subjectivities that have been constructed through the engagement with immutable screens as default mode have to be reconsidered as well (without their mindset being judged as inferior to previous modes of attention).

Bearing in mind all of the characteristics of digital screens that I discussed, the new subject of the digital screen may affect new conditions for self-reflexive poetics. The latter interfere with illusion and spatio-temporal coherence, reminding readers and users of media's constructedness as well as their own act of perception. Digital media, however, create subjects equipped with a vision constructed through the daily use of fractured screens, able and ready to oscillate between illusionary representation and engaging interactivity. Reflections on media, for their part, involve comparable oscillations: violations of linear time and transgressions of the narrative space inscribe reflections on the medium into the artifact. From that perspective, it is no coincidence that Manovich *en passant* points out “a surprising affinity” between 20th-century leftist avant-garde and new media aesthetics: like the political aesthetics of Bertolt Brecht’s epic theater that sought to reveal the conditions of illusionist productions, interactive media such as video games and DVD titles have the subject oscillate between the roles of perceiving viewer and participating user (207).[11] Manovich suggests that in the case of new media, these shifts do not “liberate” but rather further involve and absorb the subject. However, these similarities between digital media experiences such as computer usage and 20th-century avant-garde aesthetics, I believe, bear the potential to shift the status that reflexive aesthetics, once labeled as avant-garde, will have in our digital future.

However, and interestingly enough, the established forms (or “institutional modes”) of mainstream narrative cinema and literature have not shifted in any such manner. People do still go to the movies, where they are still largely being served linear storytelling. To decide whether we either find ourselves in a transitional phase of a progressive decline of narrative fiction or just in a culture where narrative’s naturalized status is reshuffled by alternatives would be overhasty and is not the intention of my analysis. However, what I do contend is that any violation of “invisible” narrative norms is taking place under changed circumstances in contemporary digital culture relative to previous times and potentially inscribes the artifact's reworking of subjectivity in the face of digital media.

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[11] In a different chapter of *The Language of New Media,* Manovich also suggests that new media and digital animation in particular are a return to older cinematic traditions such as hand colored images (304-307).

Therefore, I consider the study of digital screens to be crucial to a timely understanding of narrative literature and film. Bearing in mind what I have called the immutability of screens toward their users in both print and cinema, I would like to reconsider Manovich's rhetorical argument that he uses when defining different types of screens in order to suggest a new emphasis: "Dynamic" screens that show moving content are just as static as "classic" screens regarding the user experience that they offer; print media and cinema have become "classic" in the digital age. Computers and mobile devices have become pervasive in everyday life, and shed new light on the lack of opportunity that both the moviegoers and the readers of print media have to interfere with what appears on these screens. Although they cannot be thought to be automatically more democratic, 21st-century interactive screens in any case highlight the immutability of 20th-century screens, as well as the subjects that traditional narratives imply.

Narrative and Database

In contemporary media theory, a possible shift in the status of narrative has been discussed primarily in terms of its relationship with database. In the 21st-century information age, the database is considered to be an increasingly important cultural form that contrasts and, possibly, competes with narrative. Lev Manovich has pointed out in his seminal book *The Language of New Media* that the database represents the world as an unordered list of items while narrative organizes items as events in terms of a cause-

and-effect trajectory (225). This difference in organizing items leads Manovich to his influential metaphor of narrative and database as “natural enemies,” who are “competing for the same territory of human culture” as they made meaning out of the world (ibid.). Manovich redefines narrative in computer culture, drawing on the concept of the interface as the level of interaction with a database:

> The ‘user’ of a narrative is traversing a database, following links between its records as established by the database’s creator. An interactive narrative (which can also be called a *hypernarrative* in analogy with hypertext) can then be understood as the sum of multiple trajectories through a database. A traditional linear narrative is one among many possible trajectories, that is, a particular choice made within a hypernarrative. . . . Traditional linear narrative can be seen as a particular case of hypernarrative. (227)

Manifest in this redefinition of linear narrative in terms of a trajectory through a database is Manovich’s contention of the different status of database and narrative in contemporary culture: in his definition, new media objects are all databases underneath their appearance as linear narrative, interactive narrative, or database. This means that databases now underlie and support narratives, although the logic of narrative as cultural form is opposite to the logic of the database (228). Consequently, Manovich comments on the competition between narrative and database as cultural forms: “A database can support narrative, but there is nothing in the logic of the medium itself that would foster its generation. It is not surprising, then, that databases occupy a significant, if not the largest, territory of the new media landscape. What is more surprising is why the other end of the spectrum—narratives—still exist in new media” (228). Manovich here suggests that the database as cultural form has the potential to displace narrative in contemporary culture and might even do so in the near future.

However, inherent in his own redefinition of narrative in new media as a trajectory through a database is a possible argument against this prophecy: while database and narrative follow a different logic when relating items, the practice of narrative is insofar contained and preserved in database culture as humans use it as an interface in order to interact with databases. In other words, just because more and more items are archived in databases, this does not necessarily have to keep humans from navigating these archives by organizing their items in terms of stories.

From a similar perspective, N. Katherine Hayles has criticized Manovich's conceptualization of narrative and database as "natural enemies" in her book *How We Think: Digital Media and Contemporary Technogenesis*. She instead suggests that narrative and database are more appropriately seen as "natural symbionts" (2012, 176) involved in a beneficial relation:

> Database can construct relational juxtapositions but is helpless to interpret or explain them, it needs narrative to make its results meaningful. Narrative, for its part, needs database in the computationally intense culture of the new millennium to enhance its cultural authority and test the generality of its insights. If narrative often dissolves into database, . . . database catalyzes and indeed demands narrative's reappearance as soon as meaning and interpretation are required. (176)

Hayles here defines narrative and database not as competitors, but rather as two cultural forms that have different purposes and are interdependent. However, Hayles's argument stretches the term of narrative into one that covers any meaning-making human interaction with data, detaching the notion from any causality chains. This perspective finally results from a cognitive perspective on narrative as a model of how the mind thinks (179): Hayles contends that bound to the linear sequentiality of language, narrative is a temporal technology that is essential for humans in their search for meaning (180), which seems to lead her to arrive at a notion of narrative that is not limited to linear sequentiality anymore but encompasses human meaning-making.

Changing the Subject

Hayles's definition of narrative as essential to humans strangely excludes it from what she defines as technogenesis. The notion of technogenesis builds on the neural plasticity of the brain, central nervous system, and peripheral nervous system and refers to the idea that humans and technics have coevolved together in terms of a reciprocal causation (10). Hayles suggest that we think “through, with, and alongside media” (1), meaning that e.g. digital media can cause psychological and even physical changes that remove us from the mindsets of previous ages (2). By delegating more and more cognitive tasks to networked and programmable machines, namely computers, human agency and thought are enmeshed with larger networks in terms of an extended cognition (3). As some of the major environmental changes with neurological consequences in the digital age, Hayles names a faster communication, more intense and varied information streams, more integration of humans and intelligent machines, and more interactions of language with code, which, according to Hayles, affect habits related to reading and attention (11).

Bearing in mind my previous discussion of the digital screen, I consider narrative not to be essential, but rather to be a cultural practice potentially affected by technogenesis. If the multiple, interactive screen has become the prevalent visual system in contemporary culture, cognitive multitasking is constantly demanded from users while the illusionary spaces of traditional narrative media are denaturalized. Assuming a reciprocal causation in terms of technogenesis, digitization brings about new subjectivities, which on their part again foster new forms of communication. In this circuit, mindsets that contrast with those constructed by narrative media would further multiply.

In the context of my inquiry, intersections between the theorizations of Hayles, Butler, and de Lauretis are of particular significance. I read Hayles's idea of technogenesis as a cognate concept to Teresa de Lauretis's notion of the technology of gender. Although Hayles's narrower notion of technology differs from de Lauretis's broader concept of the social technology in the vein of Foucault, the idea of technogenesis and that of technologies of gender share common ground: both concepts assume a circuit of co-construction between "representation" (de Lauretis) or "performative" act (Butler) and subjectivity, and both Hayles and de Lauretis highlight technical set-ups (or types of apparatus) beyond the content level to be crucial to the construction of subjectivity within this circuit. By integrating Hayles's interest in digitization and de Lauretis's focus on gender as social identity, we understand that the media with which we interact are not only "man"-made, but also shape gender identities (though many of these through exclusion).

However, these concepts differ regarding the ways in which they do or do not involve biology. In contrast to de Lauretis's and Butler's theorizations, Hayles's concept of technogenesis involves the human body into the circuit, thinking the impact of technology in terms of neurological changes in the central and peripheral nervous system, which are currently driven by our increasing engagement with digital media (11-12). It is not my intention to solve the question of materiality in gender discourse, which is a debate of its own. Rather, by stressing the consensus between these concepts, I seek to build an analytical framework to ask how media and adaptations (as a comparative practice) in particular can provide opportunities to reference and reorganize gender binaries in their encounter with users, readers, and viewers. It cannot be determined within the framework of my analysis whether this reorganization should be thought as a temporary experience that remains fluid as an assemblage of artifact and user, a diversification of users' ideas about themselves and others, or an actual and lasting inscription into cognition. Some of these questions would need different scientific disciplines and their methodological expertise, including various fields within the natural and social sciences. Instead, following the lead of the skeptical attitude towards knowledge production inherent to gender discourse in the humanities, I resist the desire for an elegant, all-encompassing framework, adapting previous discourses into a "cyborg theory" that lays open its own stitch lines.

A dissertation about adaptation and gendered subjectivity written in the 2000s needs to take all of these aspects of media innovation into consideration, no matter if the analysis centers on digital media or not—and so does the study of literature and that of film whenever interested in subjectivity. Adaptation traditionally revolves around the now denaturalized media of narrative literature and cinema; yet as a strategy of intermedial configuration, adaptation can highlight or even critically reflect on the relationship between media, including their share in the West's realist narrative tradition. Moreover, as an intermedial constellation, adaptation is open, bearing the potential to integrate further types of media into what is shown at the movie theater (as I will further discuss in later chapters). Gender is a category of social difference that is acquired in an ongoing process of interaction with representation. Thus, it has become of particular and increasing interest throughout 20th-century criticism. Now it is time to re-read gender-oriented accounts of narrative and its framing devices in different media under the premises of a denaturalization of previous representational practices in the digital age.

1.7 Bachmann, Schroeter, Lynch, Kafka: Adaptating to “Ex-Gender”

The blurring of spatial boundaries is a central figure in my studies on the rearticulation of gender in literature, film, and in adaptation from one medium into another. This dissolution of spatial boundaries violates the integrity of the fictional time-space in the texts and films that I discuss, inscribing reflections on media technologies into the media artifacts. By gesturing beyond the frame of representation, these transgressions break the sense of illusion and destabilize spectator or readership habits that relate to gender construction.

In his publication *Ex-Cinema: From a Theory of Experimental Film and Video*, Akira Mizuta Lippit is interested in similar inscriptions: using the notion of the Derridean exergue, he discusses references to “a space outside the work . . . and yet part of it,” locating an outside space that is included in the work *as* its outside (1). Although Lippit’s endeavor is to reconceptualize mainly video art that involves such references as a "cinema elsewhere, . . . no longer cinema yet not far" (2), it is his reading of transgressions of the image frame as gestures toward a "cinema after cinema" (11) with which my analysis echoes. While Lippit sees in transgressive gestures in experimental video art "not simply the exposure of cinema, the disclosure of its apparatuses and mechanisms, nor the practice of cinema in another medium, but the actualization of cinema outside, of cinema from cinema" (13), my readings will ask in what way such gestures position the texts and films that I discuss relative to the practices of literature and film shaped by linear narrative.

In the material that I discuss, spatial transgressions are intertwined with the highlighting of gender relations. As my readings will show, these gender relations are negotiated by Bachmann, Schroeter, Kafka, and Lynch as an effect of narrative discourse. Moreover, references in their texts and films to media institutions and technologies suggest that transgressions of the norms of their own media systems effect an exit from gendered codes of subjectivity. As a literature after literature, a cinema after cinema, they construct a gender after gender. To borrow Lippit's figure of speech, we could frame this effect as an "ex-gender," a positionality that trangresses gender binaries while referencing these from what is staged as an "outside space" from within the texts and films.

In the chapters that follow, I will first discuss the literary texts regarding the ways in which these intertwine transgressive aesthetics and a critique of gender binaries. I will then move on to studying the cinematic responses and the manner in which these involve the text in intermedial constellations. Accordingly, the chapters that follow are dedicated to one text or film respectively.

In order to develop my concept of adaptation, the following chapters revisit literature and films from both the English- and German-speaking world. First, I examine *Malina* (1971), the feminist cult novel by Austrian writer Ingeborg Bachmann. The novel's first-person narrator is a female writer struggling with the constraints of literary writing, interpersonal communication, and with her traumatic past. My readings focus on the novel's references to other media such as film, audio recording, classical music, and opera. I argue that these intermedial references contribute to the novel's much-debated reflexive poetics: the novel explores literary means of expression in comparison to alternative media. The novel thereby offers adaptations into other media an opportunity to "respond" to its own intermedial reflections.

I then compare the text to New German Cinema director Werner Schroeter's film adaptation of the same title (1991). I argue that the film adaptation responds to the novel's intermedial references and the struggle of the novel's female protagonist on the visual level: the film introduces mirrors that appear throughout the course of events. These mirrors allow the protagonist to reflect on her own body image while pointing to the visuality that differentiates cinema from literature. Finally, the protagonist vanishes in mirrors, creating the impression that she transgresses the constraints of the film image.

As a second example of media-critical adaptation, I analyze correspondences between Franz Kafka's novel *The Trial* (1921) and American director David Lynch's digital video production *Inland Empire* (2006). My close readings of Kafka's novel deal with the relationship between gender, space, and the lack of a conventional plot in the text. The protagonist, Josef K., repeatedly desires female figures, and continues to find himself in situations that relate the court and its trial to sexuality. I trace a nexus of gender and space in text, showing how the latter concomitantly blurs binary distinctions between male and female figures, as well as spatial and temporal coherence. By reading the events to be meaningfully gendered, I reframe K.'s inability to take action against his situation as his struggle with appropriating the subject-position constructed in narrative tradition.

I then read Lynch's *Inland Empire* as an unofficial adaptation of Kafka's text with a female protagonist in the digital age. Similarities between text and film include the disorientation of the protagonists, unreliable spaces, the topics of sexuality and death, and the inclusion of parables. The digital video film also adapts the hyperlink structure of digital networks for the big screen, neglecting temporal, spatial, and causal orders, while doors link seemingly unrelated rooms. Lynch's film responds to Kafka's text by relating unreliable spaces and references to digital media to a critique of female stardom in Hollywood cinema. My reading of *Inland Empire* as an inscription of contemporary digital culture, its screens and posthuman subjectivities, into the pre-digital apparatus finally explores Lynch's project as a rearticulation of the very idea of adaptation in the digital age.

2 (Un)Writing the I: The Intermedial Poetics of Ingeborg Bachmann's *Malina*

Ingeborg Bachmann now is considered one of German-speaking literature's outstanding writers. In the 1950s, she became famous for her poetry, which earned her the Prize of the Group 47, the influential literary organization occupied with the reformation of German literature after the war. Due to her collections *Die gestundete Zeit* (1953) and *Anrufung des großen Bären* (1956), Bachmann was celebrated as one of the leading voices in post-war poetry by her contemporaries. According to Sara Lennox, this was because Bachmann and her colleague and friend Paul Celan moved beyond the predominant use of everyday language in German post-war poetry by drawing on a vast variety of traditions and techniques; thereby, they reestablished the connections of German poetry to the European tradition, as well as to its own problematic past of National Socialism and its aftermath in post-war society (*Murdered Daughters* 34).

Since Bachmann's first poetry reading at a meeting of the Group 47, delivered with what appeared to be great anxiety and with a weak voice, the reception of Bachmann's texts was closely tied to her public appearance, image, private life, and gender.[12] Sigrid Weigel has pointed out how interviews with Bachmann often have been driven by an interest in her private life and person rather than her texts, and mirrored a gender-specific tendency rooted in a traditional contradiction between “woman” and authorship (*Topographien* 240). Bachmann’s gender also played a significant role in critics’ reactions when she ceased to write poetry and other text forms in favor of focusing on and developing her prose: many insisted that Bachmann was out of her element when she turned away from poetry in favor of writing prose texts in the late 1950s. Although some praised the poetic quality of her prose, many considered these texts to manifest the inability of a “fallen poetess”[13] (in the words of Germany’s “literature pope,” critic Marcel Reich-Ranicki) to find a proper narrative expression for her authorial intentions (Lennox, “Rezeptionsgeschichte” 22-23).[14] The reception of Bachmann’s prose remained less positive among critics during her lifetime; her general readers, however, put “Malina" on the bestseller lists in 1971 (Borhau 38).[15]

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[12] For example, about twenty years after Bachmann died, journalist and literary critic Sigrid Loeffler reminiscence of Bachmann still reveals this intertwining of gender-specific appearance and poetic qualities in Bachmann's public perception: Loeffler writes in the popular weekly news magazine *Der Spiegel* that Bachmann's fellow poets, readers, and critics "fell for her morbid magic made from a girl's timidness and lyrical power, from shyness and poetic temerity" ("Dichterkollegen, Leser und Kritiker gleichermaßen verfielen ihrem morbiden Zauber aus Mädchenscheu und lyrischer Kraft, aus Schüchternheit und poetischer Kühnheit") (1995, n. pag.).

Read against the background of my interest in Bachmann’s writing as a critique of narrative tradition, such criticism of the lack of proper plot, trajectory, and characters echoes the demands of Bachmann’s figure Malina: in the eponymous book, Malina repeatedly urges the female protagonist to bring her writings into an order. The figure thus inscribes an anticipation and negotiation of readers’ and critics’ expectations into the texts, embodying the very criteria with which Bachmann’s writing conflicts in a programmatic manner. However, gender-oriented literary criticism had yet to emerge; instead, many male critics limited *Malina’*s relevance to that of an autobiographical account of “female sensitivity,” disregarding its cultural critique (Weigel, *Topographien* 254-255). It was not until Bachmann’s feminist reception from the mid-1970s onward that her prose texts became the main focus of scholarship and finally obtained a place in the canon of German 20th-century writing (Lennox, *Murdered Daughters* 19).

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[13] “Gefallene Dichterin.”

[14] Barbara Bondy’s review of Bachmann’s first prose collection, *The Thirtieth Year* (*Das dreißigste Jahr*, 1961), takes issue with the fact that the texts are declared to be short stories, stressing that “no criteria of the short story is met: these prose texts have no proper plot, trajectory, or characters—the last in particular” (Schardt 2011, 64).

[15] Heide Borhau charted 38 German bestseller lists published in German newspapers and magazines from April 1971 to April 1972 and came to the conclusion that *Malina* ranked highly in the year of its publication.

Malina is the only finished book among Bachmann’s longer prose texts (to which I deliberately do not refer to as “novels” for reasons I will discuss later). According to Bachmann, the book takes the position of an “overture” in the sense of a “beginning” to her multi-volume prose cycle *Ways of Death* (*Todesarten*) (Bachmann, Koschel, and Weidenbaum 95). The text *Malina* inaugurates the cycle “Ways of Death,” showing its female first-person narrator leaving unfinished her notes on a text-in-progress called “Ways of Death.” At the end of the text, the protagonist will vanish, leaving behind the figure Malina; the latter reappears in the other prose texts of *Ways of Death*, namely *Three Paths to the Lake* and *The Book of Franza*, which also tell stories of other female figures and the damage they experience (Lennox, *Murdered Daughters* 39-40). Therefore, questions of gender and narrative perspective have taken a central position in scholarship on Bachmann’s prose.

During the first decade of Bachmann’s feminist reception, *Malina* was read in terms of a “‘woman-as-victim-of-patriarchy’ stance” (Lennox, *Murdered Daughters* 2): critics understood Bachmann’s prose primarily as a depiction of ‘female experience’ while primarily discussing questions of victimhood (Lennox, "Rezeptionsgeschichte 27-28). Reading Bachmann from the perspective of the feminist paradigms of the decade, many feminist critics considered the texts to be a contribution to the endeavor of retrieving "women's culture" previously hidden from history; in that manner, Bachmann's prose seemed to anticipate the concept of *écriture feminine* along the lines of works by French feminist theorists such as Hélène Cixous, Luce Iragaray, and Julia Kristeva (Lennox, *Murdered Daughters* 20; Weigel, *Bachmann* 22).[16]

Since its feminist rediscovery, Bachmann's prose lent itself to shifting research perspectives that recently culminated in an awareness of the historical grounding of both text and interpretation. This development manifests itself in the writings of the most prolific and influential Bachmann scholars. In her seminal essay "Double Focus" ("Der schielende Blick", 1983), which strongly influenced Bachmann criticism of the 1980s (Lennox, *Murdered Daughters* 62, 72), Sigrid Weigel understands the dichotomous portrayal of an "incompatibility of the female and male principle" in *Malina* not as any eternal conflict, but rather an "expression of the experience of a woman living 'today'" (123), i.e. in a specific time and place. Reworking her own previous emphasis, Weigel suggests in her book *Die Stimme der Medusa* (1987) that the first-person narrator of *Malina* represents "that form of existence that is sacrificed at the entry of woman into the symbolic order" (37-38).[17] Weigel's most recent work on Bachmann has moved into the direction of cultural studies, beginning with her book *Topographie der Geschlechter* (*Topographies of Gender*, 1990) before turning away from her gender focus in her seminal study *Ingeborg Bachmann: Hinterlassenschaften und Wahrung des Briefgeheimnisses* (1999). The book documents Bachmann's participation in the intellectual debates of her time, in particular the aftermath of National Socialism in Germany and Austria, paving the way for new directions of scholarship beyond the scope of poststructuralist feminism (Lennox, *Murdered Daughters* 73).

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[16] The first essay to draw an explicit connection between Bachmann, psychoanalysis, and French theory was Sara Lennox's "In the Cemetery of the Murdered Daughters: *Malina*" (1980). According to Lennox, the first German-language scholar to apply French theory to Bachmann was Christa Guertler in her dissertation *Schreiben Frauen anders?* in 1982. As discussed below, Lennox presented a revision of her reading of Bachmann in 2006.

The work of Sara Lennox, who published the first essay to draw an explicit connection between Bachmann, psychoanalysis, and French theory in 1980, also moved beyond the scope of 1970s and 1980s feminism in her later publications; in contrast to Weigel and the many German-speaking scholars who followed her turn, Lennox seeks to mobilize new considerations of gender for reading Bachmann. In her 2006 study *Cemetery of the Murdered Daughters: Feminism, History, and Ingeborg Bachmann*, Lennox took her previous work on Bachmann and her recent shift as a point of departure for discussing her understanding of scholars' historical positionality, suggesting that scholars should be productively aware of the fact that their work inscribes the situatedness of their own knowledge and perspective.

In this and the subsequent chapter, I revisit the book *Malina* and the film adaptation of the same name in terms of a dialogical constellation. Bearing in mind my introductory discussion of Bazin's and Andrew's notes on adaptation, both text and film take the status of variations of the "work" as ideal construct. Chronologies and hierarchies are set aside in my reading in favor of exploring whether the adaptation raises new questions for the text. As highlighted before, I understand adaptation's dialogical potential as one that reaches beyond the scope of the transfer of content units from one medium to another, considering the different versions not only as different "readings" of what is considered to be the "work," but also as a dialog between different media, their materialities, and institutions.

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[17] For a detailed discussion of Weigel's scholarship on Bachmann throughout the decades, see Lennox 2006, 62-65.

If one revisits the references to various media and technologies in Bachmann's *Malina* in the context of the intermedial constellation of the text and film, these gain new weight: the film adaptation as dialogical partner on the level of both content and form highlights how the literary prose text responds to other forms of media. From that perspective, instances that refer to film, opera, audio recording, music, and various text forms such as letters and fairy tales do not only explore the medium of literary prose in comparison to alternative forms of expression, but also offer adaptations into other media an opportunity to respond to these intermedial cues. Moreover, intermedial references can even be considered to inscribe an anticipatory self-reflexive moment on the text's own adaptability.

Recent scholarship on Bachmann has begun to explore the text's intermediality, lacking dedication to the way the latter relates to gender in the text. In the case of *Malina*, the significance of music and that of letter writing have been widely discussed in scholarship; studies focus primarily on one of these forms of expression while the fact that a large variety of different media populates the text has not gained sufficient attention. First approaches that do so include a sub-chapter on media in *Malina* in Sigrid Weigel's extensive study on Bachmann (*Bachmann* 543-560). Following Weigel's lead, editors Oliver Simons and Elisabeth Wagner dedicated an essay collection to *Bachmanns Medien* in 2008, containing the contributions of a symposium.[18] Gisela Nittel's dissertation from 2008 centers on a single yet rather unexplored media form in *Malina*, the role of journalism and the press, continuing the idea of isolating a media form and its significance in the text. Strikingly, these contributions show a strong tendency to break with the findings of the previous decades of feminist scholarship, neglecting the significance of gender in Bachmann instead of updating the latter's analysis in new theoretical and thematic contexts.

Bearing in mind these reflections, close-readings of Bachmann's *Malina* show that the book is a narrative-critical negotiation of gendered subjectivity, which heavily draws on intermedial references. More precisely, I seek to show that the first-person narrator experiments with different media forms, which position her as gendered subject.

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[18] In his analysis of what he calls Bachmann's media poetics, Harun Maye suggests the concept of media transmission as a theoretical model for Bachmann's language-critical poetics (162-164). His discussion of Bachmann's poetic lectures centers on what he describes as Bachmann's demasking of the "I," which frames the latter as a linguistic figure tied to transmission rather than an actual subject or individual. The expression of an "I" thereby is defined as dependent on writing and the medium of scripture, marking a problematic subject position (172). While Maye's account does not touch upon the question of gender, *Malina'*s interrogation of the expression of an "I" also engenders subject positions, which become demasked in terms of discursive constructs. Konstanze Fliedl's contribution on Bachmann's typewriters and the trope of "Verschreibungen" (both "commitments" and "mistakes in writing"), which focus on anagrams as metonymic experiments, notes: "The fact that *Malina* is a compendium of scenes of writing as well as a serial staging of various media…has been noticed, the position of the female "I" as a possible or impossible subject of the respective discourses has been reflected" (31). These laconic remarks, which relegate the mentioning of Weigel's works to the footnotes, tick off gender-oriented reflections as "done," instead of integrating the latter into new considerations regarding Bachmann's mediality—a tendency that is characteristic of the essay collection as a whole.

The first pages of the book stage the coming-into-being of both the text and its first-person narrator, which is marked by a critique of literary traditions. A paratextual element that is added to the title *Malina* declares the text to be a novel, "Roman," addressing the question of genre. However, the prose text neither involves proper characters, nor a clear plot, meaning that it cultivates a problematic relationship with the genre label. The genre label of the novel does not simply apply to the text, but rather is introduced in order to contribute to the latter's skeptical attitude toward established genres of writing.

On the first pages, a list of characters and specifications of time and place is given in the manner of the *dramatis personæ* page of a play. In the action-driven genre of drama, such pages are usually meant to facilitate the reader's (and possible producer's) understanding of the characters and settings that carry the action. In *Malina*, however, this information is listed only to be called into question: in the first paragraph of the prose text that follows the list, the narrator starts problematizing the time specification "Zeit: Heute" (time: today):

> But I had to think long and hard about the Time, since "today" is an impossible word for me, even though I hear it daily; you can't escape it. When people start telling me what they have planned for today—not to mention tomorrow—I get confused. My relationship with "today" is so bad that many people often mistake extreme attentiveness for an absent-minded gaze. This Today sends me flying into an anxious haste, so that I can only write about it, or at best report whatever's going on. Actually, anything written about Today should be destroyed

> immediately, just like all the real letters are crumpled or torn up, unfinished and unmailed, all because they were written, but cannot arrive, Today. (2)[19]

Here, the narrator rearticulates the specification of time into a problem of writing. In contrast to other people's everyday ("jeden Tag") use of the word "today," the expression causes the narrator to enter a state of heightened attention captured in the image of the attentive gaze or "aufmerksame[n] Blick". The latter is linked to a mode of writing characterized by "Angst" and "Eile," anxiety and urgency. Drawing on the image of the letter that will never be read in the same moment it was written and should rather remain unsent, the passage speaks of an impossible writing, framing the text as a tenuous undertaking that operates in the negative of both conventional use of language and genre-guided textual production.

In the same vein, the text takes issue with the classical unities from Aristotle's *Poetics* when speaking of the unity of time and place, "Einheit der Zeit" and "Einheit des Ortes" (10). According to the narrator, they have made their way into the text only by force and by coincidence respectively, meaning that a tension between the unities and the I's agency as narrator is staged. Accordingly, the narrator's redefinition of the unity of time as today ("heute") undercuts chronological time as the conventional temporality of narrative. By attributing to the whole text the time specification of "today," the narrator opposes the category of time as a course or progression (Frei Gerlach 242). Thereby, the text's temporality subtends cultural arrangements that coordinate time; moreover, the text opposes the literary manifestation of such cultural arrangements, which typically takes the form of narrative progression.

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[19] "Nur die Zeitangabe musste ich mir lange überlegen, denn es ist mir fast unmöglich, 'heute' zu sagen, obwohl man jeden Tag "heute" sagt, ja, sagen muss, aber wenn mir etwa Leute mitteilen, was sie heute vorhaben — um von morgen ganz zu schweigen —, bekomme ich nicht, wie man oft meint, einen abwesenden Blick, sondern einen sehr aufmerksamen, vor Verlegenheit, so hoffnungslos ist meine Beziehung zu "heute," denn durch dieses Heute kann ich nur in höchster Angst und fliegender Eile kommen und davon schreiben, oder nur sagen, in dieser höchsten Angst, was sich zuträgt, denn vernichten müsste man es sofort, was über heute geschrieben wird, wie man die wirklichen Briefe zerreisst, zerknüllt, nicht beendet, nicht abschickt, weil sie von heute sind und weil sie in keinem Heute mehr ankommen werden." (*Malina* 8-9)

The non-linear temporality in *Malina* relates to the narrator's negotiation of gender relations. Franziska Frei Gerlach reads the narrator's experience of a constant "today" or now in *Malina* as a marker of gender difference, as it contrasts with both Malina's relation to historical time indicated by his doctoral degree in history, and with Ivan as the only figure who has a year of birth, 1935, and a "geregelte Arbeit," well-regulated working hours (Frei Gerlach 243). French theorists of *écriture féminine* considered non-linear temporality and corresponding aesthetic practices in terms of "woman's time"—a term coined by Julia Kristeva that denotes a feminist recuperation of archaic and futural temporal measures such as cycle, period, pregnancy, and the "creative time" of aesthetic practice; "woman's time" (*temps du femmes*) is thought to oppose historical periodizing frames predominant in the largely male-authored tradition of the historical novel (Apter 4).

This notion of "women's time" originally was tied to an essentialist idea of female corporeal experiences. This experience was considered to become manifest in aesthetic practices that oppose linear time. In her recent re-reading of Kristeva, Emily Apter has pointed out how temporal concerns in feminist theory have moved beyond essentialist thinking. Apter references Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's remarks on "queer time" in her introduction to the essay collection *Novel Gazing: Queer Readings in Fiction* (1997).

Sedgwick discusses her idea of queer time as an "untimed lifespan," suggesting that the temporal disorientation and revelatory moment experienced by Proust's narrator after a long withdrawal from society would be impossible in "a heterosexual père de famille" (and his timed lifespan, so to speak): instead, the father keeps embodying through "progressing" roles within the family the arrival of children and grandchildren (Sedgwick 26-27). Another example that Apter provides for contemporary gender-oriented critiques of periodical time is the work of Elisabeth Grosz. Influenced by the Deleuzian idea of "becoming" instead of being, Grosz seeks to remind readers of "the conditions under which bodies are enculturated, psychologized, given identity, historical location, and agency" (2). According to Apter, such critiques of periodicity, for instance as a rethinking of causality, historicity, and geopolitics, effects a "becoming-feminist" of time theory itself (Apter 3, 17).

Reconsidered from the perspective of such non-essentialist contemporary perspectives on time and gender, the narrator in *Malina* produces an "untimed lifespan." The suspension of temporal progression of Malina and the fact that it is put into play with gender difference does not document any universal experience of "women," but rather dislocates the temporal and differential parameters of identity. Moreover, the narrator's reconceptualization of temporality contributes to the various strategies used to blur the boundaries of the diegetic level. By calling the time of action "heute," today, the narrator conflates narrated time and narration time, meaning that the time in which the events take pla"ce intersects with the moment of writing or speaking. This blurring effect is amplified by the fact that the narrator lists the "I" as part of the *dramatis personæ*. By appearing as both the voice that creates the text as well as a character that is being created, the "I" ("Ich") frames itself both as subject and object of writing. First-person narration here is introduced as a vehicle for exploring the relationship between self, text, and language.

For the purpose of self-description, the "I" quotes information from its passport: "Austrian passport, issued by the Ministry of the Interior. Official Austrian I.D. Eyes—br., Hair—blnd; born in Klagenfurt; some dates follow and a profession (crossed out twice and written over); addresses (crossed out three times); above which in clear block letters: Ungargasse *6, Vienna III" (1).[20] Other than in the descriptions of other characters in the *dramatis personae*, the "I" here turns to a document issued by a state institution to give a self-description. This self-description from an outside perspective and in bureaucratic terms strongly contrasts with the rest of the narration, which conveys a point-of-view perspective and inner monologues in the form of first-person narration. Thus, the description of the document highlights that the "I" as a self remains ungraspable to those categories such as eye color, occupation, etc. that ususally make the basis of social identities.

At this point, the narrator's name and gender remain unspecified. The respective entries of name and gender from the passport are skipped. The name, both a device to secure the coherence of a character over time (Frei Gerlach 242) and a marker of gender attribution, is missing. Thereby, the "I" appears to be simultaneously displaced from both gender relations and progressive time as constitutive parameters of narrative. By leaving the gender unspecified, the potential of first-person narration to stage the narrator's authorship over its own identity is played out in terms of autopoiesis: in the prolog that precedes the first chapter as a text before the text, the "I" produces itself outside of the gender relations, temporal and spatial parameters of narrative tradition. Much time has passed since the autobiographical discourse that surrounded the book's publication, so that readers now are more likely to desist from autobiographical readings that would reduce the "I" to a stand-in of author Ingeborg Bachmann and assign the narrator a female identity.

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[20] "Österreichischer Pass, ausgestellt, vom Innenministerium. Beglaubigter Staatsbürgerschaftsnachweis. Augen br., Haare, bl., geboren in Klagenfurt, es folgen Daten und ein Beruf, zweimal durchgestrichen und überschrieben, Adressen, dreimal durchgestrichen, und in korrekter Schrift ist darüber zu lesen: wohnhaft Ungargasse 6, Wien III" (*Malina* 8).

Rather, the idea of the narrator as female is grounded in interactions with male figures and the mentioning of dresses and make up. Strictly speaking, the "I" will not become a "woman" until being referred to as such in her interaction with her lover Ivan. The prolog as "text before the text" is staged as a textual layer where the "I" at first comes into being as an entity to whom dichotomous boundaries of gender and text do not apply. Thereby, gender is conceptualized in *Malina* as a relational category produced in interaction with desired subjects and the accessories of performances of femininity.

This en-gendering of the writing subject is played out within the constellation of the narrator with two male figures, Malina and Ivan. Malina already appears in the prolog before Ivan plays the central role in the first chapter, "Glücklich mit Ivan" ("Happy with Ivan"). Their introduction within different textual layers suggests that they bear different functions within the constellation of figures. Ivan takes up the role of a desired subject in the sense of a lover. As my discussion of their conversations on the telephone will show, he offers the opportunity for the narrator to play out subjectivity in relation to another.

Scholarship has widely agreed on reading Malina as doppelgänger of the narrator. In the prolog, the “I” associates Malina with male figures from literary texts and myths, insinuating her own authorship over his appearance. The narrating self recalls calling him Saint George or Florizel, linking Malina to ideas of strength and virtue (Baackmann 84). In Susanne Baackmann’s reading, Malina therefore embodies a superior rationality that has been acquired by the “I” and can be activated in moments of helplessness (84-85). Malina's lack of passionate feelings repeatedly saves the “I” from being overwhelmed: he holds the narrator in a manner that soothes her emotions (*Malina* 196), whereas later, the narrator tells him that she holds herself whenever she cannot hang on to him (345).[21] Read as a doppelgänger to the I-figure, Malina represents strategies of self-stabilization as well as the narrator’s participation in an order of thinking that bears male connotation. On the other hand, he can also be considered to represent the subordination of “female” feelings under a “male” order of thought (Baackmann 83). Malina also embodies a model of writing that opposes that of the narrator: he repeatedly asks her to organize her notes to make them more accessible; it was also Malina who gave the narrator of most of her books by male canonical authors (as I will further explore below). However, the “I” emphatically rejects his demands, characterizing the text to be a poetological experiment outside of canonical writing.

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[21] “Er hält mich. Ich kann ihn wieder halten. Ich hänge an ihm, hänge mich fester an ihn. . . . Malina hält mich, bis ich ruhiger bin” (196). — “Ich muss meinen Kopf halten. . . . Es ist meine Art, mich an mich zu klammern, wenn ich mich nicht an dich klammern kann” (*Malina* 345).

In the first chapter, the narrating self experiments with the medium of film in her imagination. While driving with Ivan and his children in their car, music from the radio is superimposed on her impressions of the city of Vienna:

> The Burgtheater, the Rathaus and the Parliament are all flooded by the music from the radio, this should never stop, it should last a long time, a whole film, which has never played before, but where I witness one marvel after another, because it is entitled DRIVING THROUGH VIENNA WITH IVAN, because it's entitled HAPPY, HAPPY WITH IVAN AND HAPPY IN VIENNA, VIENNA HAPPY, and these rapid, dizzying sequences don't stop when the brakes come on hard, . . . HAPPY, HAPPY, it's called happy, it has to be called happy, becuase [*sic*] the whole Ringstrasse is awash with music." (34)[22]

The fast speed of the car makes the formerly familiar places in Vienna appear in a new light, as they are decontextualized and re-inserted into a flow of images. The latter is layered with a musical audio track that contributes to the fusing together of the impressions into the visual track of the narrator's imaginary film—an effect that she describes with the neologism of "unterschwemmen": as a variation on the German word for "submerging" that also integrates the word for "under," the expression conveys the idea of both a layered and liquefied character of her perception.

The creation and perception of her imaginary film is described as an experience of great pleasure. The scene could come across as a simple narcissistic retreat from the city, if it was not for the allusions to the institutions that make up part of the cityscape: the theater, city hall, and parliament, all institutions of public life, are stripped of the burdensome ("bedrückend," 63) aura that they have for the narrator, as she involves their appearance in her imaginary film. Instead of being constrained by any institutions, her "film" allows her to suspend institutional power. In her mind, she considers various possible titles for her film, indulging in her experience of an authorial position. In her imaginary film production, the narrator experiments with the position of a subject who—as producer and spectator—is able to constitute a form of expression and experience that operates outside of any institutional apparatus.

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[22] "Das Burgtheater, das Rathaus und das Parlament sind von einer Musik unterschwemmt, die aus dem Radio kommt, das soll nie aufhören, noch lange dauern, einen Film lang, der noch nie gelaufen ist, aber in dem ich jetzt Wunder über Wunder sehe, weil er den Titel hat MIT IVAN DURCH WIEN FAHREN, weil er den Titel hat GLÜCKLICH, GLÜCKLICH MIT IVAN und GLÜCKLICH IN WIEN, WIEN GLÜCKLICH und diese reißenden Bilderfolgen, die mich schwindlig machen . . . , GLÜCKLICH, GLÜCKLICH es heißt glücklich, es muss glücklich heißen, denn die ganze Ringstraße ist untermalt von einer Musik." (*Malina* 63-64)

On the other hand, her imaginary film remains bound to kitschy ideas of romance. She emphatically repeats possible titles of her film, including the title "happy with Ivan," underlined by capital letters. While these exclamations express the narrator's exaltation, they at the same reiterate genre conventions surrounding romance in cinema.

Finally, her imaginary film also forms part of her attempts to produce a "happy" text. The film thus also shows how she struggles with creating a text that is acceptable to Ivan as a viable space for their relationship (Leahy 194). The titles that she assigns to her film echo the chapter's title, "Glücklich mit Ivan," and fashion her experience into an ideal state of her relationship with him. Ivan's impact on her existence, writing, and imagination remains ambivalent. Although Ivan embodies the expectation of a "happy" book, the narrator also states that Ivan has come to make the consonants more solid, open up the vowels, and change her vision. She thereby stresses how she draws on Ivan's presence in order to push further her self-reflexive poetics through a mingling of lyric, dramatic, epic forms of expression.[23] The narrator repeatedly promises Ivan to write him a happy story, although she will never manage to finish it—neither in the form of a text-within-the-text, whose fragments are scattered throughout the book, nor in the form of a happy ending that involves both of them.

Most of the "I"'s communication with Ivan is mediated through the telephone. During the figures' conversations on the telephone, what exactly is being said is less important than the very opportunity to have a conversation and to keep it going (Weigel, *Bachmann* 547; Leahy 196). As a medium that regulates presence and absence (Weigel, *Bachmann* 547), as an "effigy and as relation to absence," the telephone "asserts an originary nonpresence and alterity" (Ronell 84). Thus, in the telephone conversations, the narrating self constitutes and assures herself in relation to another—here the voice of another (Weigel, *Bachmann* 548). Leahy suggested that rather than conveying any specific information, the dialogs in *Malina* "serve to weave a text across the space that separates the narrator from Ivan" (196). The textualization of the dialogs addresses the distance between the two of them, creating a metaphorical space of their relationship. Here lies the main difference between the telephone and the verbal medium of the written literary text: although the telephone separates the voice from the appearance of the speaker's body just as much as first-person narration, the telephone produces a relational subject position through a structure of address that depends on calling or being called by the voice of another. Therefore, the telephone is the central prop in the narrator's exploration of a possible self-constitution in relation to a desired other. Towards the end of the text, however, the phone calls become less frequent and taper off; accordingly, the narrating self describes her decreasing stability.

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[23] Leahy has stressed these passages on Ivan, considering them to show "I"'s attempt to "transport herself entirely into Ivan's domain" (2007, 196). With regard to the narrator's imaginary film, I would hesitate to downplay her authorial position, rather framing her attempt to be happy with Ivan as something with which she experiments rather than by which she is absorbed.

The medium of the telephone also relates to questions of temporality raised in the text. Sigrid Weigel has argued that it is primarily the narrator's waiting on the phone that produces the temporal mode of a constant "today" (*Bachmann* 548) by enabling the narrator to stop time, smoking and waiting. Actually, her smoking and waiting (e.g., "aber heute rauche ich und warte und rauche ich vor dem Telefon," 43) is reiterated like a *leitmotif* throughout the whole text, gaining the status of a subversive element that suspends both linear time and the course of action in a state of waiting. This waiting for conversations with Ivan is described by the narrator as a soothing experience, whereby her self-constitution through the address of another also takes place during her waiting as a powerful anticipation.

Moreover, the motif of smoking relates to her experimental self-constitution. Smoking denotes an action minimal enough to merely highlight the vital act of breathing, stressing the narrator's state of pause. Therein lies the connection between the narrator's suspension of linear time and her mantra of "smoking and waiting": the demonstrative eventlessness of her smoking and waiting replaces narrative movement, adding to the narrator's experiments with a subject position independent from linear progression.

The second chapter further foregrounds the role that intermedial reference plays throughout the book. The chapter's title, "Der Dritte Mann" (The Third Man), refers to the film of the same name (Bartsch 87), drawing attention to the intermedial references that appear throughout the chapter. By quoting the famous film based on a screenplay by Graham Greene and set in Vienna, the title underscores both the book's focus on an unresolved murder (Achberger 155-156). Moreover, the citation refers to the Viennese location of the events in Bachmann's text only to relegate this Vienna to an imaginary realm where time and space become even more obscured: the narrator's nightmarish reiterative representation of the father further radicalizes the text's problematization of time and space, taking place at a site called "Überall und Nirgends" (everywhere and nowhere), and in a time that is "überhaupt nicht mehr," not existent at all. Visions that involve gas chambers and SS uniforms suggest that the father also represents violent patriarchal forces on a societal level (O'Sickey 174) and beyond the narrator's individual experience, dispersing historical narrative into traumatic fragments in a time and place undone. It is precisely this associative shattering of narrative that finally enables the narrator to conclude that the/her father is her "murderer," writing and solving her own murder story in which the body of evidence is her own.

In the chapter's sequences of nightmares, references to various media show the father as a master of media production. As writer and director of an opera, the father joins forces with the theater manager to press the daughter to appear in his orchestration:

> In my father's grand opera I am supposed to take over the lead role, ostensibly it's the wish of the artistic director, who has just announced it, because then the public will come in droves, says the director, and the journalists say the same. . . . The director himself forces me into a costume, and since it was made for someone else, with his own hand he fastens it with pins that rip my skin . . . it's the last minute before curtain, and I run through the entire opera house, screaming in despair. There isn't a libretto to be found anywhere, and I hardly even know two

> entrances, it's not my role. . . . I have a suspicion, but the curtain rises, and below this huge crowd, these droves, I start to sing at random, but, despairing, I sing "Who'd help me, who'd help me!", and I know the text can't go like that, but I also notice that the music is drowning out my desperate words. . . . a young man sings sure and loud and sometimes confers with me rapidly and secretly, I realize his voice is the one audible in this duet anyway, because my father wrote the whole part for him, and nothing for me of course, since I don't have any training and am only supposed to be shown. . . . I have saved the performance, but am Lying between the empty stands and chairs with a broken neck. (122-123)[24]

The passage plays with two meanings of the notion of the voice ("Stimme"), namely the human voice and the part of a vocalist in a musical composition. The narrator's voice that lapses into desperate ("verzweifelt") singing and screaming cannot assert itself within the orchestration of the father. Instead, the narrator's voice is subordinated to her father's authorship: no part has been written for her; moreover, her attempts to find her voice are drowned by the orchestral music and the male singer's voice written and arranged by the father. The words she improvises in her despair, such as "who'd help me," or "so we would die" (123) suggest that there is no help possible for her trying to find her metaphorical voice.

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[24] "In der großen Oper meines Vaters soll ich die Hauptrolle übernehmen . . . , weil dann das Publikum scharenweise käme, sagt der Intendant, und die Journalisten sagen es auch. . . . Der Intendant selber zwängt mich in ein Kostüm, und da es für jemand andren gemacht war, steckt er es eigenhändig mit Stecknadeln ab, die mir die Haut aufritzen . . . . Es ist die letzte Minute vor dem Auftritt, und ich laufe, verzweifelt und schreiend, durch das ganze Opernhaus. Nirgends ist ein Textbuch zu bekommen, und ich weiss kaum zwei Einsätze, es ist nicht meine Rolle. . . . Mir kommt ein Verdacht, aber der Vorhang geht auf und unten ist die riesige Menge, scharenweise, und ich fange aufs geratewohl zu singen an, aber verzweifelt, ich singe 'Wer hülfe mir, wer hülfe mir!' und ich weiss, dass der Text so nicht heissen kann, aber ich merke auch, dass die Musik meine Worte, die verzweifelten, überdröhnt. . . . Ein junger Mann singt sicher und laut und manchmal berät er sich rasch und heimlich mit mir, ich begreife, dass in dem Duett sowieso nur seine Stimme zu hören ist, weil mein Vater nur für ihn eine Stimme geschrieben hat und nichts natürlich für mich, weil ich keine Ausbildung habe und nur gezeigt werden soll. . . . Ich habe die Aufführung gerettet, aber ich liege mit gebrochenem Genick zwischen den verlassenen Pulten und Stühlen" (*Malina* 215-217).

The father's orchestration involves her only as spectacle: her presence, with an unfitting costume, is meant to attract masses of spectators ("scharenweise"), while she is supposed to remain silent to the audience. Under the direction of the father and his institutional allies, the medium of opera is shown to threaten the narrator's voice by reproducing a gender binary where she is granted only iconic presence. Here, the father's take on her body even exceeds the tendency of conventional representation to synchronize the female voice and body that Kaja Silverman described as an anchoring of woman's voice in corporeality that hinders female authorship in film. By depriving her of a voice, the father fashions her corporeal presence into the ultimate spectacle. However, her narration in the literary medium recaptures her desperate voice, addressing the text's readers as a counter-audience to that of the father's orchestration.

In another passage, the father produces a film, once more forcing the protagonist into an unwanted part:

> On a small ship my father is beginning to shoot his great film. He is the director, and everything runs according to his will. Once again I have had to swallow my pride, for my father would like to film a few sequences with me, he gives me his guarantee that I won't be recognized, he has the best mask-makers [or make-up artist, C.M.] in the world. . . . I sit around waiting, not yet dressed or made up, with curlers in my hair, only a towel over my shoulders, but suddenly I discover that my father is taking advantage of my situation and is already filming, in secret, I jump up indignantly, can't find anything to cover myself, nonetheless I run up to him and the cameraman and say: Stop that, stop that at once! I demand these cuts be destroyed immediately, this has noting to do with any film, it's against the contract . . . . My father answers that that is precisely what he wanted, it will be the most interesting part of the movie, he continues filming. Horrified, I listen to

> the humming of the cameras and again demand that he stop and hand over the piece of film, but he continues to shoot unmoved and again says no. (130)[25]

Here, the father's position as director of a film allows him to visually expose the daughter. He promises her control over her own appearance, namely make-up and a presentation that would cover her identity and protect her privacy, only to secretly capture her unfinished, naked appearance. Moreover, he declares her experience of exposure and helplessness to be at the core of his film project. This exposure is amplified by the fact that she is shown in the process of getting ready, revealing her wish to keep her private identity covered and control her appearance. In the hands of the father and his team, the medium of film and its ability to capture her nude body become an instrument of her complete victimization.

As the narrator describes the course of events, the scene highlights technological equipment involved in film production. In her struggle to resist, the narrator notices the buzzing sound ("Summen") of the camera, begins to look around, and realizes that she is surrounded by machines and equipment, "Apparate, die überall auf Deck herumstehen" (229). This insight into the material conditions of her father's film production is what finally prompts her to find a solution. She grabs a bowl with soap water (the "kleine Schale mit seifigem Wasser, das für die Maniküre dasteht vor dem Spiegel," 229), and pours the water over the equipment. Thereby, she appropriates an appliance formerly used for the father's false pretenses, turning his own device against him. Although her appropriation and destruction of the father's apparatus mark a moment of successful defense against her father, her achievement remains overshadowed by a feeling of guilt: burnt human bodies float by after another one of her father's ships has exploded, having her worry whether her resistance might be responsible (230).

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[25] "Auf einem Schiff beginnt mein Vater seinen großen Film zu drehen. Er ist der Regisseur und es geht alles nach seinem Willen. Ich habe auch schon wieder klein beigegeben, denn mein Vater möchte ein paar Sequenzen mit mir drehen, er beteuert, ich werde nicht zu erkennen sein, er hat den besten Maskenbildner. . . . Ich sitze wartend herum, bin noch nicht angezogen und geschminkt, habe Lockenwickler auf dem Kopf, nur ein Handtuch über den Schultern, aber plötzlich entdecke ich, dass mein Vater die Situation ausnutzt und heimlich schon dreht, ich springe empört auf, finde nichts, um mich zu bedecken, ich laufe trotzdem zu ihm und dem Kameramann hinüber und sage: Hör auf damit, hör sofort auf! Ich sage, dieser Filmstreifen müsse sofort vernichtet werden, das habe nichts mit Film zu tun, denn es ist gegen die Abmachung . . . . Mein Vater antwortet, gerade das wolle er, es werde die interessanteste Stelle im ganzen Film werden, er dreht weiter. Ich höre mit Entsetzen das Summen der Kamera und verlange noch einmal, dass er aufhört und das Stück Film herausgibt, aber er filmt unbewegt weiter und sagt wieder nein" (*Malina* 229).

These appearances of the father as producer and censor of various media throughout the nightmares add an additional layer to the meanings that intersect in his figure. The references to media production frame the father and his accomplices as a cipher of patriarchal media institutions that produce a victimizing femininity within gender binary and hierarchy. Moreover, the chapter integrates dreams that frame media as an instrument of violence with dreams that refer to fascist violence, alluding to the fascist employment of media for the purpose of propaganda. By calling both his film and opera production grand or great ("seinen großen Film," 229, and "die große Oper meines Vaters," 215) respectively, the narrator further stresses the representative character of the production beyond any single specific film or composition. Since the father draws on both the popular cinematic medium and the high-brow theatricality of the opera, he represents an omnipresent power that does not appear to be limited to any specific social milieu. Through the varying imagery of her nightmares, the narrator interweaves in the figure of her father her (auto)biographical traumatic experience of the protagonist, a historical and societal dimension introduced by references to fascist violence, and the production of gender relations as power difference in cultural production.

Thus, these scenes do not only provide additional metaphorical images for the traumatic experience of the daughter, but rather problematize the narrator's writing within the larger context of intermedial cultural production. By repeatedly involving the image of the lost or unheard voice, the nightmares relate the victimizing effects of media under the father's direction to his obstructing of the protagonist's endeavor as narrator. While the physical attacks on the protagonist are repeatedly shown to be silencing throughout the chapter (Achberger 157), the imagery of silence repeatedly is intertwined with intermedial references: in the nightmare scenes, various media are shown to put the narrator in a situation where she experiences speechlessness. Thus, in the hands of the father, other media forms compete with and silence her own voice as narrator and her attempt to produce her text in the literary medium.

Revisited from the perspective of the film adaptation of *Malina*, the text addresses visuality by negotiating subject and object positions in terms of relations of looking. Strikingly, both film and opera contrast with both the literary medium and the telephone insofar as they involve visual representations of the corporeal presence of performers. In the nightmare chapter, visual or multi-track media are used by the father, while books and writing utensils appear to be related to the narrator. Media that involve visuality here serve as an instrument of power, allowing the father to control the daughter's body. Accordingly, the description of society as "allergrößter Mordschauplatz" (the biggest murder scene there is) involve the spectacle and spectators as a cipher for visual representation (O'Sickey 177) in relation to violence. The father's orchestrations involve the daughter's corporeal presence only as a means to perform his power.

Moreover, the father not only directs visual media, but also sabotages the narrator's reading and writing. In one of the dreams, he has her book collection ravaged by a group of men whom he has hired:

> He says: Just stay where you are, stay put, and watch! I don't understand anything anymore, but I know there's a reason to be afraid, and the it turns out the fear was not the worst thing, since my father orders my bookshelves to be torn down, in fact he says "tear them down," and I want to place myself in front on the books, but the men block me, grimacing, I thrown myself at their feet and say: Just leave my books in peace . . . he [i.e., the father] begins taking five, six books at a time like bales of bricks, and hurls them so they land headfirst on an old wardrobe. With frostbitten, numb fingers, the accomplices pull out the bookshelves, everything collapses. (119)[26]

In a sadistic manner, the father here turns the destruction of the book collection into a spectacle for the daughter to watch. His actions refer to the Nazis' public burning of books. The narrator names various book titles from her collection, including works by Kleist, Balzac, and Hölderlin, stressing that she received them from Malina: "Malina had given me the most beautiful books, my father will never forgive that" (120) ("Malina hat mir die schönsten Bücher geschenkt, das verzeiht mein Vater mir nie," *Malina* 210). Here, Malina as the donor of the books, takes the position of a stand-in for the male protagonists of the literary canon, as well as the facilitator of the narrator's participation in literary discourse; thus, he is an opponent of the father and his sabotaging of the daughter's readership.

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[26] "Er sagt: Bleib nur, bleib, und schau zu! Ich verstehe nun nichts mehr, aber weiss, dass Anlass zur Furcht ist, und dann ist die Befürchtung noch nicht das schlimmste gewesen, denn mein Vater ordnet an, dass meine Büchergestelle abgerissen werden sollen, ja, er sagt 'abreissen', und ich will mich vor die Bücher stellen, aber die Männer stellen sich grinsend davor, ich werfe mich vor ihnen auf den Boden und sage: Nur meine Bücher lasst in Ruhe . . . . Er [der Vater, C.M.] beginnt, fünf, sechs Bücher auf einmal zu nehmen, wie einen Packen Ziegelsteine, und wirft sie, so dass sie auf den Kopf fallen, in einen alten Schrank. Die Gesellen mit frostigen klammen Fingern ziehen die Gestelle weg, es kracht alles nieder" (*Malina* 209-210).

Consequently, the father also keeps her from writing. In one of her dreams, he locks her up in prison (263-265). Once more enforced by institutional helpers, here by prison guards, the father denies her wish to get paper and a pencil in order to be able to write. In that manner, he repeatedly undermines the narrator's retreat into a medium where the narrator's "voice" is not tied to the materiality of the body or the appearance of any body image. By involving the self-reflexive imagery of writing into such dream scenes, the narrator places the father not only at the content level of the narrated dream, but suggests that the father's impact exceeds the scope of diegesis, posing a threat to the narrator's very autodiegetic agency over her own text.

In chapter one, however, a scene involving a mirror develops a different perspective on visuality. In my discussion of the film adaptation of *Malina* in the next chapter, I will argue that the adaptation picks up the motif of the mirror from the book, amplifying the image's significance by turning it into the leitmotif of a self-reflexive exploration of female subjectivity in the audiovisual medium. Though the nightmares in chapter two of the book show how visual media inhibit the narrator's subjectivity when institutionally orchestrated, the narrator here experiments with spectatorship and image production herself. When she finds herself alone in front of a mirror, the narrator fashions and eyes her own appearance; her look conflates that of both the creator and audience of her own body image. Thereby, she cancels out any institutional participation in image production in a manner that is reminiscent of her imaginary film production.

In front of the mirror, she tries on a house frock that she enjoys wearing as it justifies her staying at home often (“das viele Zuhausebleiben erklärt”):

> I wouldn’t want to have Ivan here while I’m trying it on, even less Malina, and since Malina isn’t there I can only cast frequent glances in the mirror, I have to turn around in front of the long mirror in the hall, miles away, fathoms deep, heavens high, fables removed from the men. For an hour I can live without time and space, deeply satisfied, carried off into a legend, where the aroma of a soap, the prickle of a facial tonic, the rustle of lingerie, the dipping of brushes into pots of powder, the thoughtful stroke of an eye-liner are the only reality. The result is a composition, a woman is to be created for a dress. In complete secrecy designs for a female are redrawn, it is like a genesis, with an aura for no one in particular. The hair must be brushed twenty times, feet anointed and toenails painted, hair removed from the legs and armpits, the shower turned on and off, a cloud of powder floats in the bathroom, the mirror is studied, it’s always Sunday, the mirror, mirror on the wall is consulted, it might be Sunday already. (86)[27]

The narrator names the absence of any male figures as a precondition of her experience in front of the mirror. In order to express how the mirror detaches her from the male figures, she uses adjectives that refer to spatial depth, height, and distance (“meilenweit, klaftertief, himmelhoch, sagenweit”), conveying an experience of spaciousness and creating the expression that her look into the mirror expands the boundaries of her environment. By distorting both spatial and temporal relations, the mirror enables the narrator to enter a state of being that is “zeit- und raumlos,” without any time and place at all. The mirror crystallizes into an emblem where the parameters of narrative subject formation are suspended.

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[27] “Ich möchte aber beim Anprobieren Ivan nicht hier haben, Malina schon gar nicht, ich kann nur, weil Malina nicht da ist, oft in den Spiegel sehen, ich muss mich im Korridor vor dem langen Spiegel mehrmals drehen, meilenweit, klaftertief, himmelhoch, sagenweit entfernt von den Männern. Eine Stunde lang kann ich zeit- und raumlos leben, mit einer tiefen Befriedigung, entführt in eine Legende, wo der Geruch einer Seife, das Prickeln von Gesichtswassern, das Knistern von Wäsche, das Eintauchen von Quasten in die Tiegel, der gedankenvolle Zug in einem Konturenstift das einzig Wirkliche sind. Es entsteht eine Komposition, eine Frau ist zu erschaffen für ein Hauskleid. Ganz im geheimen wird wieder entworfen was eine Frau ist, es ist dann etwas von Anbeginn, mit einer Aura für niemand. Es müssen die Haare zwanzigmal gebürstet, die Füße gesalbt und die Zehennägel lackiert werden, es müssen die Haare von den Beinen und unter den Achseln entfernt werden, die Dusche wird an- und ausgemacht, ein Körperpuder wolkt im Badezimmer, es wird in den Spiegel gesehen, es ist immer Sonntag, es wird in den Spiegel gefragt, an der Wand, es könnte schon Sonntag sein“ (*Malina* 153).

The narrator then describes the styling of her own appearance in the mirror image as crucial to this suspension of time and place. Due to her itemizing of the props of cosmetic procedures, including soap, facial toner, puffs, and jars, Schmid-Bortenschlager argues that the narrator seeks to fulfill Ivan's expectations that derive from a male gaze: "Die Ich-Erzählerin ist in dieser Szene eben nicht, wie behauptet, allein, 'meilenweit' von den Männern entfernt, sondern der männliche Blick schaut aus ihren eigenen Augen auf sie im Spiegel" (44). At the same time, however, the narrator notes that the props are used to create "a woman" ("eine Frau"), suggesting a degree of alienation from her mirror image, while the notion of woman as a composition ("Komposition") stresses the constructedness of the gender expectations she is meeting.

Grammatical features of the text further highlight the transformative effect of the mirror experience. Most expressions involve a so-called empty subject, such as "es entsteht eine Komposition" (a composition is coming into being), an "it-subject" without a semantic role (Teich 110), or the passive voice, grammatically erasing the presence of the narrator as the "I." Even her looking into the mirror is paraphrased with an empty subject, "es wird in den Spiegel gesehen." In the mirror's space, the already unstable subject position of the first-person narrator is radicalized. Recognizing "woman" to be a composition comes with a decomposition of the "I," who is refashioned into an impersonal entity that transgresses grammatical representation.

The subsequent passage speaks of "all women" in a prophetic tone. Printed in italics, the passage picks up the typeface of the legend of the Princess of Kagran told by the narrator when she imagines herself writing at an old desk (67). Reiterating the previous shift to a different mode of writing, the italics refer to the previous legend, though now drawing a utopian scenerio that includes all women in the world. The passage speaks of them having golden eyes and hair, as well as wearing golden shoes and clothes, predicting that in this Golden Age to come, the poetry of their sex, gender, or dynasty—all meanings that intersect in the German word "Geschlecht"—will be recreated ("die Poesie ihres Geschlechts wird wiedererschaffen werden," 154). The utopian prophecy thereby draws a connection between the appearance of the female body and the exclusion of female poets from culture, attributing to the mirror image the function of a window into a utopian realm where female writing is reestablished.

The end of the utopian vision is staged as the narrator's return from the mirror space:

> I have stepped into the mirror, I vanished in the mirror, I have seen into the future, I was one with myself and am again not-one with myself. I blink, once again awake, into the mirror, shading the edge of my eyelid with a brush. I'm able to give it up. For a moment I was immortal and I—I wasn't there for Ivan and wasn't living in Ivan, it was without significance. (87)[28]

The "I" here returns from its aforementioned suspension of first-person narration in favor of an empty subject and prophetic voice. The narrator points out: "Ich war einig mit mir und bin wieder uneins mit mir" (I was at one with myself and am divided again). Thus, her return to linguistic representation, the "today"-time of the text, and the relationships outside the mirror is described as a switching back to an experience of an inner split. Throughout the rest of the book, the narrator will not reiterate her experiment with the mirror, but rather focus on exploring questions of subjectivity through writing. The ending will mirror the staged disappearance from this section, however with a change in imagery and tone. As I will show in the subsequent chapter, the film adaptation will respond to and play out the potential of the mirror that the book indicates.

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[28] "Ich bin in den Spiegel getreten, ich war im Spiegel verschwunden, ich habe in die Zukunft gesehen, ich war einig mit mir und ich bin wieder uneins mit mir. Ich blinzle, wieder wach, in den Spiegel, mit einem Stift den Lidrand schraffierend. Ich kann es aufgeben. Einen Augenblick lang war ich unsterblich und ich, ich war nicht da für Ivan und habe nicht in Ivan gelebt, es war ohne Bedeutung" (*Malina* 154).

References to other media in *Malina* also include a comprehensive critique of the press. As Gisela Nittel has explored in her dissertation, the text addresses journalists, their work environment, the content that they produce, and the impact that journalistic content has on individuals and society; the text's own engaging of violence and death forms a counter-mode to journalistic media, exposing a form of "murder" that tends to go undetected in the press's stories of crime (Nittel 192, 194-195, 197).

While the narrator deals with the press in multiple ways, the appearances of journalists highlight gender relations. The narrator has worked in the news industry, reads the newspaper on a regular basis, and is the subject of a press interview in her capacity as a writer (Nittel 157). All journalists that appear in these contexts are male. When the narrator tells Malina about her working the night shift in a newsroom, she describes how she used to be the only woman in the room, performing only supportive tasks such as brewing coffee or type-writing the texts of the group of male journalists. The newsroom as a site where public discourse is produced also is a place where subjects are engendered in a manner that reiterates stereotypical binaries of male authorship and the merely auxiliary character of female activity.

In the same manner, the interview scene in *Malina* relates a “satirische Medienbehandlung” (Beicken 195) to a negotiation of gender binaries. The narrator gives an account of an interview led by the journalist Herr Mühlbauer, in which she takes his generic questions as a chance to give unwelcome answers that are either challenging or provocative. Mühlbauer thereupon erases her statements from his audio recorder. As Sigrid Weigel has pointed out, the text inverts this erasure: not only are the erased statements included in the narrator’s account of the interview; moreover, by omitting the journalist’s questions, it is his voice that is left out in the text (*Bachmann* 189-190; also Nittel 192).

Read against the backdrop of the book’s rich imagery of speechlessness, the scene shows a male author using media technology to claim authorship over a female voice—and finally being thwarted in the attempt. Mühlbach’s use of the voice recorder grants the narrator’s statements only the status of a raw material that he has to shape. The scene highlights how male discourse has the medium build on the materiality of the female voice as the root of its precarious existence. Again, the narrator’s corporeality becomes a means to control her in the hands of others. However, the narrator’s account of the interview reverses the erasure, recuperating the lost voice in order to reclaim an authorial position. Thus, just as in the dream chapter, where the father’s use of media silenced the narrator, her textual practices here again oppose the silencing effect that media in the hands of others have on her.

In the third and last chapter, the narrator relates both the medium of the daily newspaper and that of film to her negotiation of narrative practice. Alternating between prose and dialogical passages, she tells Malina about a time when she used to work for the news. At the end of her narration, Malina criticizes her for not being true to her previous account of the events—“Once you described it to me completely differently” (172) (“Du hast mir das einmal ganz anders erzählt,” *Malina* 303); as she responds, their dialog soon involves the topic of film production:

> Me: I’m not telling. I won't talk, I can’t, it’s more than a mere disturbance in my memory. Tell me instead what you did in your Arsenal.
>
> Malina: Nothing much. The usual things, and then some film people came, they need a battle with Turks. . . . Beside we’ve already given permission for another film that the Germans want to shoot in the Hall of Fame. (172)[29]

Here the dialog quickly shifts from an emphasis on the narrator’s anti-narrative attitude to the topic of film as a medium of historical narrative. The narrator emphatically opposes Malina’s demand for proper narrative, stressing that the reason for her attitude is not a simple lack of memory. Rather, her anti-narrative stance is foregrounded as a poetic strategy that objects to any pathologizing simplifications. Immediately, “I” asks about Malina’s work at the Museum of Military History (Heeresgeschichtliches Museum Wien, or Arsenal), prompting him to speak of the institution’s involvement in several film productions. One of these productions is led by Germans, as he says, and centers on the "Ruhmeshalle" (hall of fame), where the portrayal of the most important military events in Austrian history in the form of frescos co-occur with marble plaques that remember the names of hundreds of fallen officers.[30] Malina's remark about "people from the movies" who "needed a battle with the Turks" refer to a film about Austrian history. By speaking about these film productions, Malina laconically comments on the production of the two nations' historical narratives through media and institutions. By quoting this dialog as part of her text, the narrator draws a connection between the films as examples of historical narratives on the one hand and Malina's demands for narrative accuracy regarding her past, suggesting that both are questionable.

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[29] “Ich: Ich erzähle nicht. Ich werde nicht erzählen, ich kann nicht erzählen, es ist mehr als eine Störung in meiner Erinnerung. Sag mir lieber, was hast du heute getan in deinem Arsenal.

Malina: Nichts Besonderes. Das übliche, und dann sind Leute vom Film gekommen, die brauchen eine Türkenschlacht…Außerdem haben wir noch für einen anderen Film zugesagt, den wollen die Deutschen in der Ruhmeshalle drehen” (*Malina* 303).

"I" positions her own speaking and writing outside of institutional discourse. She comments on the film production by stating that she would like to observe its process someday, or even participate as an extra (304). Her remarks draw her as an outside observer or minor participant of the institutional production of historical narrative. Then the short dialog between her and Malina, which is framed by prose passages, comes to an end, thereby taking the form of a vignette about narrative representation and history that reflects on textual practices of *Malina* as a whole.

The disappearance of the narrator toward the end of the book has been widely discussed in scholarship. Many readings follow the lead of the negotiation of gender roles and the denunciation of a "murder," framing "I" as a victim of patriarchal oppression and violence—either in terms of an autobiographical expression of Bachmann, or as a "cultural history of femininity" (Kunze 17) beyond individual experience. Others have complicated the reasons for her disappearance. The fact that the text continues after "I" has disappeared further 'encrypts' the status of the narrator as subject. Against the backdrop of the narrative-critical experiments throughout the text, Britta Herrmann's reading of the "I"'s disappearance as a poetological experiment appears persuasive. Hermann suggests that by leaving the source of the voice that speaks after the narrator's disappearance undefined, the text problematizes first-person narration: the "I" that first speaks and then disappears into another "voice" does not become a subject, but rather only exists as form that can be dropped by the narrating voice (67). This means that rather than showing how a woman is suppressed by a male figure, the text's experimentations with authorship and narrative perspective finally turn away from stereotypical concepts of female victimhood and writing (ibid. 51). The narrative voice is not contained in the "I," but rather transcends any containment or embodiment. However, instead of pitting this understanding of Bachmann's poetological experiment against others, I would suggest to consider various perspectives as multiple layers of the text's meaning: the text intertwines accounts of traumatic experience and poetic experimentation with authorial and diegetic positionalities.

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[30] In the first chapter, Malina already mentions a film production that takes place in the hall of fame (96).

The network of intermedial references in *Malina* plays to this ambivalence of the text's poetological exploration on the one hand and its contribution to the discourse of female silence on the other. As institutional apparatus, media technologies are shown to secure the textual subject within a visible or audible female corporeality that allows for objectification. The voice of the narrator, however, finally foregrounds the literary medium as one that allows the voice to slide in and out of its involvement with various media: it is captured on and erased from an audio tape, but overwrites the event with text; it is silenced on an opera stage, but creates a counter-account and -audience of the event through text. The prolog and its staging of a coming-into-being of text, narrator, and gender set the stage for the narrator's mobility that allows her to move from one medium to another.

Towards the ending of Bachmann's *Malina*, the ambivalence between silencing and enabling qualities of media remains suspended. The mirror scene and its conflation of gazes pause any relations in which the narrator is involved, experimenting with an unseen subjectivity outside of grammatical representation. Although this scene will heavily inspire the film adaptation, the book ends on a different note. As a finale to the text's poetic and intermedial experiment, the narrating self's disappearance in the wall finally has opposing meanings intersect: on the one hand, the scene connotes female silence and victimization; on the other hand, the disappearance of a narrating self who staged its own coming into being, becoming gendered, and moving between various forms of representation, also denotes an escape and exit.

The "I" then becomes a mere grammatical vehicle to "slip" out of the text. While it is used throughout the text in order to convey an experience characterized to a large extent by suffering, the authorial voice finally is not contained within this "I" in terms of a proper subject or character. Rather, the "I" becomes a vehicle for the suspension of the narrating voice in-between silence and authorship.

3 Unscreening Disintegration: Mirroring in Werner Schroeter's Film Adaptation of Bachmann's *Malina*

Director Werner Schroeter's film *Malina* (1991) is the first attempt to adapt Bachmann's prose text of the same name. Despite the awards that Schroeter won for *Malina*, the film was harshly criticized by many scholars: many contended that the adaptation had oversimplified the struggle of the female protagonist relative to Bachmann's text, especially since the film left out many of the dreams from the second part of the book that deal with the protagonist's childhood trauma, or did not clearly frame these as dreams.[31] Such judgmental readings of the film mostly depend on established readings of the prose text as their point of departure, understanding the adaptation as derivative, falling behind the complexity of the source text

Revisited against the backdrop of recent developments in adaptation studies, criticism of the film seems to adhere to what Robert Stam has identified as an expectation of "fidelity." The expectation of a film adaptation being "faithful" to the adapted novel often leads to an understanding of differences between text and adaptation as deficiencies, quietly reinscribing an axiomatic superiority of literature to film (Stam 2000, 58; see my introductory chapter). The reception of Schroeter's film among

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[31] For instance, Elizabeth Boa disapproves of the film in a side note to an article on Bachmann, in which she understands the text as depiction of a neurotic's inner fantasies and fears, blaming Schroeter for disregarding their exterior, societal origins (135). Reading a quote from the dialog in terms of a masochistic tendency of the film's protagonist, Kathleen Komar contends that Schroeter created an "extremely male-dream-oriented version of Bachmann's text" that twists Bachmann's text far from "its original meanings and implications" (98). Kurt Bartsch even considered the adaptation to be a setback in the reception of Bachmann (159).

Bachmann scholars echoes the widespread “the book was better”-attitude. As of yet, none of the scholarly reactions to the film adaptation of *Malina* have questioned whether the film attempted to be in accordance with the victimization of the female protagonist in the book. However, perspectives that rely primarily on Bachmann’s reception can be challenged based on Robert Stam’s suggestion that we consider adaptation as a turn in a dialogical process into which a film adaptation involves the source text (64): according to Stam, film adaptation can produce a reading, critique, or rewriting of prior material (76). Thus, an intermedial reading of Bachmann’s prose work and Schroeter’s film allows for further discussion: deviance in Schroeter’s adaptation can be revisited in order to explore whether it takes up the function of commenting on Bachmann’s project that could provide its own discursive contribution to or “activist stance” (Stam 64) on matters Bachmann addresses.

I have argued in the first chapter that adaptation has the potential to reflect on how media technologies shape our knowledge and experience: I framed adaptation as an intermedial constellation that potentially fosters a critical perspective, challenging readers and viewers to reflect on the aesthetic and technological differences between the media (i.e., making a comparison that goes beyond comparing events and characters in texts and films). In order to approach the film adaptation of *Malina*, I would like to repeat in particular that I contend that adaptations of literature into other media are able to contribute to the media-critical, reflexive perspectives that these literary texts are attempting to convey to readers.

In the close reading that follows, I seek to show how Schroeter's film adaptation responds to Bachmann's reflexive poetics by reflecting on the adaptation's cinematic medium. In addition to highlighting adaptation's media-critical potential, I suggest that a reading guided by this understanding reveals how Schroeter's *Malina* does not simply reiterate the failure of the female protagonist. Rather, the adaptation into another medium complicates the position of the protagonist through its cinematic reflection. Instead of repeating the protagonist's victimization in another medium, the shift to the audio-visual medium creates moments that convey the sense of a solution, developing a dialogical response to the protagonist's struggle in prose.

The fact that the adaptation omits or obscures most of the references to trauma in Bachmann's text can be reconsidered as a strategy to stress the aesthetic and technological dimension of this dialog between text and film. Material from the "dream chapter" in Bachmann's text appears interspersed throughout the film without being framed as dream content.[32] Psychologizing readings of Bachmann's *Malina* are well-established in Bachmann scholarship. These interpretations attribute aesthetic features such as discontinuities and other non-realistic features primarily to the pathological state of mind of the protagonist (Bail 1984, Horn 1995, Komar 1994). However, over-psychologizing the narrator's literary experiments as an effect of mental illness denies her voice discursive authority: the narrator is framed as lacking control over her textual practices. To some extent, such readings reiterate a long-standing tradition of denying female voices discursive authority. As Kaja Silverman has pointed out, many mainstream films have female voices express involuntary utterances (e.g., screams) or speak with an accent or impediment. Furthermore, female voices hardly ever appear in the form of a disembodied voice-over (Silverman 56-61).[33] By leaving out most of the references to the traumatic past of *Malina*'s protagonist, the film adaptation takes the textual practices in Bachmann's text seriously, insofar as these appear to be utterances of discursive authority. By integrating the narrator's "dreams" about her childhood trauma, the film adaptation dilutes any distinction between dream and "reality," considering all of the material to be equally valid. Thus the adaptation effectively de-privileges psychologizing readings of Bachmann, responding to Bachmann's reflexive practices with reflections on the audio-visual boundaries of cinema.

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[32] For instance, the film adaptation begins with a scene that is described as a dream in the novel: the protagonist being humiliated and physically attacked by a man who, to Bachmann readers, appears to be her father.

Of particular importance to my analysis of the adaptation of *Malina* are technological differences between the media of literature and film. The multi-track character of film—as the merging of written material, images, sounds, etc.—allows for the creation of tensions not available to the merely verbal medium of literature (Stam 56). I argue in this chapter that the film reflects on this technological difference between adaptation and prose text by gradually overwriting the textual material with images that conflict with the supposed 'failure' of Bachmann's narrator. Instead, the film addresses and displaces the discursive constraints of its medium by diluting any dichotomous boundaries between masculinity and femininity, film spectator and film character, and inside and outside of the diegesis (i.e., the world of the story), finally culminating in an ending that provides an alternative to the disappearance of the woman in Bachmann.

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[33] Kaja Silverman has discussed these examples as strategies of mainstream cinema to deny female voices discursive authority. These effectively contain female voices, denying them to inhabit a different location from that in the diegesis (56-61). See my introductiory chapter.

This blurring of boundaries is first and foremost produced by instances of mirroring that appear throughout the film. The adaptation picks up the motif of the mirror from Bachmann's text, where it had already problematized the identity of the protagonist in terms of her identification with her mirror image (Pommé 259; see ch. 1). The visual track of film, however, is able to grant mirror images a media-specific immediacy unavailable to the literary medium. The adaptation of *Malina* turns the mirror into a leitmotif that recurs throughout the course of events. The film thus develops a much more extensive imagery of mirroring relative to the book, using mirrors to point to the specifics of cinema. Departing from early appearances of diegetic mirrors (as part of the action on the screen) in the film, later instances of mirroring also involve cinematographic means that I call an aesthetics of mirroring: these simulate reflection in a way that disorients the spectator by destabilizing the boundaries and coherence of the cinematic space.[34]

These destabilizing effects of the film's mirror images echo with the unstable boundary between the two central figures: the female protagonist and the figure called Malina. Scholarship has agreed on interpreting the nameless female protagonist and the male character Malina in both the text and the film as doppelgängers (e.g. Seiderer 1991, Komar 1994). In the film, their double identity is adapted by means of *mise-en-scène* (the arrangement of people and objects within scenery) and *mise-en-cadre* (the cinematographic work in terms of framing and camera distance): these often divide the image into distinct halves, assigning them to each of the two characters respectively (Seiderer 89).[35]

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[34] Effi Mikesch was the cinematographer, Juliane Lorenz edited the film.

A similar arrangement complicates the two figures' relationship in the first scene involving a mirror, which is placed shortly after the beginning of the film (*Malina* 00:06:20-00:07:44). The dialogue between the woman and Malina centers on her existence and her self-reassurance via the gaze of others: Malina wants to guarantee that she exists, as he says, whereas the woman criticizes the idea that she would not exist otherwise. In this scene, a gender specific order of spectatorship is introduced and negotiated, which matches Laura Mulvey's analysis of gender relations in mainstream narrative cinema. According to Mulvey's analysis, cinema reinforces binary gender concepts by constructing masculinity as bearing the gaze and femininity as "to-be-looked-at-ness" (19): mainstream cinema relies on displaying a woman as spectacle, creating binary gender positions in terms of dichotomous subject and object positions within a regime of looking (see ch. 1).

The aforementioned scene from Schroeter's film addresses this traditional function of male characters as agent of the gaze by dint of Malina's actions and statements. While the female protagonist is looking at her image in a pocket mirror, Malina is looking at the female protagonist, criticizing her behavior. He thus defines himself as bearer of the gaze while asking her to let go of her own look into the mirror. In offering to guarantee that she exists, as he says, he is trying to establish himself as constitutive entity of her presence as an object of his gaze. Here, Malina is a stand-in for the spectator: he articulates the audience's expectation of gendered binaries of looking that traditionally organize the mainstream cinematic experience. Furthermore, he refers to the idea that in narrative fictional cinema, the spectator can imagine himself to constitute the film image. As Christian Metz suggested, the spectator in cinema becomes "a great eye and ear without which the perceived would have no one to perceive it, the instance, in other words, which *constitutes* the cinematic signifier" (48).

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[35] Ute Seiderer gives a detailed account of images that suggest the doppelgänger relation via mise-en-cadre throughout the film. However, she suggests a reading in terms of pathology, considering the protagonist to be schizophrenic.

However, the film here references the gendered subject-object dichotomy only to interrogate this dichotomy through both cinematographic strategies and the characters' dialog. The characters argue about the woman's looking into her pocket mirror. The cinematographic means that frame the dialog complicate the gazes in play. The *mise-en-cadre* of the shot underpins the woman's actions as a withdrawal from Malina's gaze: she is kneeling on the floor and against a wall, holding up a pocket mirror (see fig. 1). While Malina is criticizing her posture and her look into her mirror, the composition of the image stresses the fact that she is blocking his gaze: the vertical line at the center axis of the image that is produced by the door frame behind her is running right through her mirror, underlining the mirror's shielding character that blocks off Malina's looking and stresses her own. Her focusing on her image in the pocket mirror, which is placed at the center of the film image, stresses the right side of the film image, excluding the left side where the male doppelgänger Malina is shown. The pocket mirror here gains a double character: while its culturally defined function was to facilitate gender-specific body practices required by female *to-be-looked-at-ness*, namely optimizing visual appearance "for strong visual and erotic impact" (Mulvey, 19), this function is superimposed by the protagonist's use of the mirror as hideaway from the male gaze.

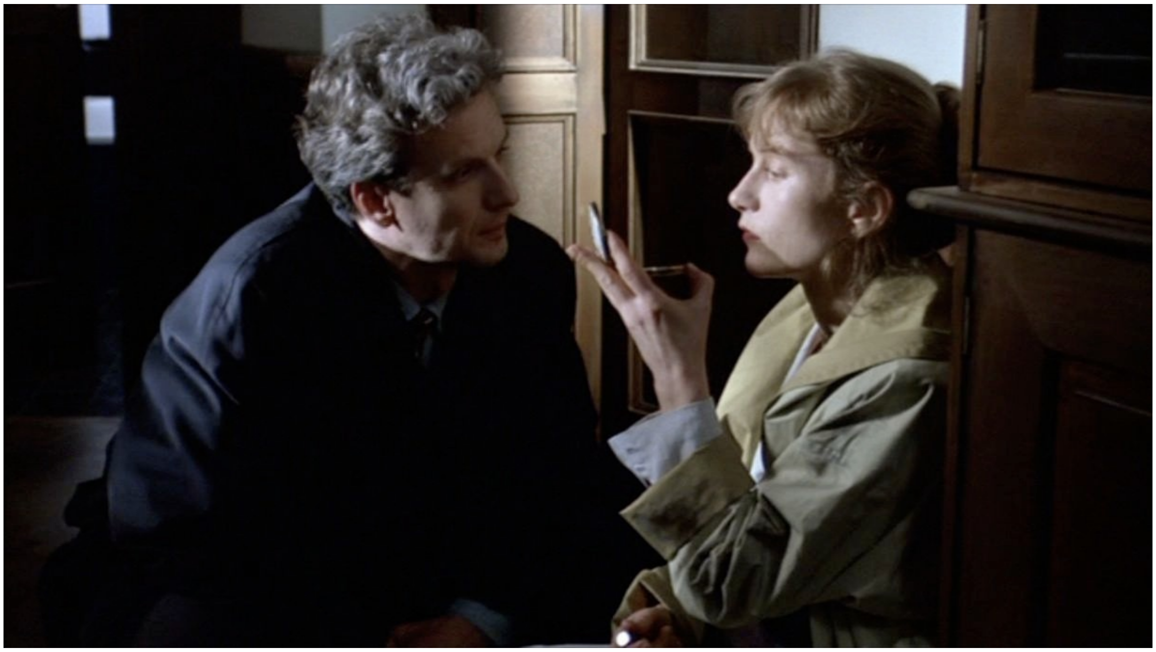

Fig. 1. The female protagonist is blocking Malina's gaze with a pocket mirror. *Malina*. Dir. Werner Schroeter. Perf. Isabelle Huppert, Mathieu Carriere, Can Togay. Concorde, 1990. DVD.

On the other hand, Malina can still see her, which suggests that her withdrawal might only be a fantasized one. Bearing Lacan's concept of the mirror stage in mind, the scene superimposes this withdrawal with a moment of possible (mis)recognition of one's own mirror image. In Lacan, the moment in which one (mis)recognizes oneself in the mirror for the first time is a formative one, providing an image of one's own (imagined) totality and agency that contrasts with the previous experience of fragmentation (76). As prosthetic ideal, the mirror image allows for pleasure derived from the assumed ability to constitute the self to appear as one with the ideal (Hurst, 304), meaning that the subject is caught up in trying to achieve this ideal whereas this remains impossible. From this perspective, the protagonist here is involved to some extent in an identification along the lines of Lacan: she is stating that the mirror was where she came into being, seemingly making herself independent from the gaze of another (here Malina) while remaining caught up in her involvement with her mirror image. The pocket mirror, while helping her to assure herself of her presence, might just as well be deceiving her about both Malina's looking and her own misrecognition of herself.

In this complex interplay of gazes, both the protagonist's and Malina's looking refer to the spectator of the film. According to Christian Metz, spectators identify with images in cinema in a way similar to the identification with mirror images (48, 50-51). Thus, the spectator's looking resembles the protagonist's look at her mirror. At the same time, Malina's demanding look at her echoes expectations surrounding the female spectacle in cinema. Thus, the doppelgänger relation between the protagonist and Malina here also reveals itself in their simultaneous miming of the spectator from different perspectives.

However, the exclusion of the male doppelgänger by dint of the mirror remains fragile toward the end of the scene. The multi-track character of film is used in order to convey the instability of the protagonist's agency: after a cut to a different scene where the protagonist is walking outside, Malina's utterances continue in the form of a voice-over. By criticizing her choice of clothes and her paleness, Malina is still demanding the woman's appearance to be fashioned in a manner that pleases him. Here, the clear cut on the visual level contrasts with the continuity on the audio track. His voice overlays the female body image, seemingly commanding her movements. The woman's narcissistic withdrawal into identification with the mirror image as a prosthetic ideal has not been effective regarding the cancellation of a traditional masculine gaze. Traditional orders of spectatorship have not been reorganized entirely yet. Rather, they are now in flux.

At a later point, the negotiation of the gaze further involves the spectator of the film. After an encounter with her lover Ivan, the female protagonist calls for Malina, who suddenly appears. Both run into the bathroom, where they have a conversation, while the *mise-en-scène* for the first time involves those strategies in which an aesthetics of mirroring is evident (00:23:28-00:25:20). Editing and sound design separate the bathroom from the other rooms of the apartment: the hard sound and a close up of the slamming door stress the spatial border and transitory moment. The next cut marks a violation of the 180-degree rule of the "invisible style" by jumping the axis of action, which causes disorientation for the viewer.[36] Editing here violates the conventions of the construction of cinematic space, and suggests that, by changing spaces, the characters shift to a different visual order.

After the characters enter the bathroom, the next shot shows them in a medium close up from a three-quarter front angle (see fig. 2).[37] This camera perspective and the characters' actions suggest that it is the mirror in the bathroom at which they are looking. Here, the film image becomes the mirror of the mirror: the diegetic mirror in the bathroom is not visible, but only present via its 'mirrored' image. The camera as

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[36] The 180-degree rule is a convention that restricts camera and editing to keep the camera on one side of the axis of action.

[37] This means that a static shot shows the characters from a three-quarter front angle.

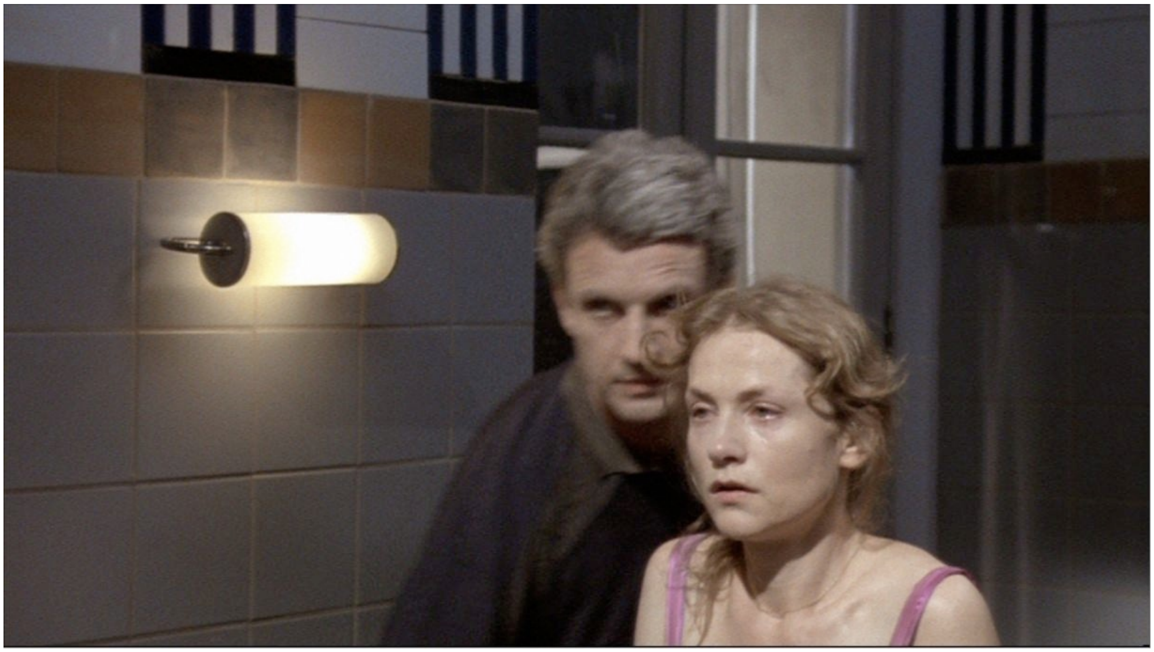

Fig. 2. Looking at the bathroom mirror. *Malina*. Dir. Werner Schroeter. Perf. Isabelle Huppert, Mathieu Carriere, Can Togay. Concorde, 1990. DVD.

perceiving entity is not located in the depicted space anymore, but steps back behind the mirror of the screen and opens up a mirror world behind it. The cinematic space is transgressed by a diegetic, yet invisible mirror. The screen gains depth towards the viewer and becomes part of the diegesis, ceasing to provide any reliable boundary between the realms of spectator and character.

Due to this transgression of cinematic space by means of mirroring, the position of the spectator is shifted. According to Metz, the screen resembles a mirror in that it provides a panel for the desired object to appear in front of the spectator's eye; the camera is a stand-in for the spectator, who usually observes the world on the screen as an invisible voyeur (45, 50-51). In this scene, however, this position has changed: identifying with the camera's act of perceiving, the spectator is no longer at the edge of the world he is observing, but finds himself rather inside of or behind the mirror at which

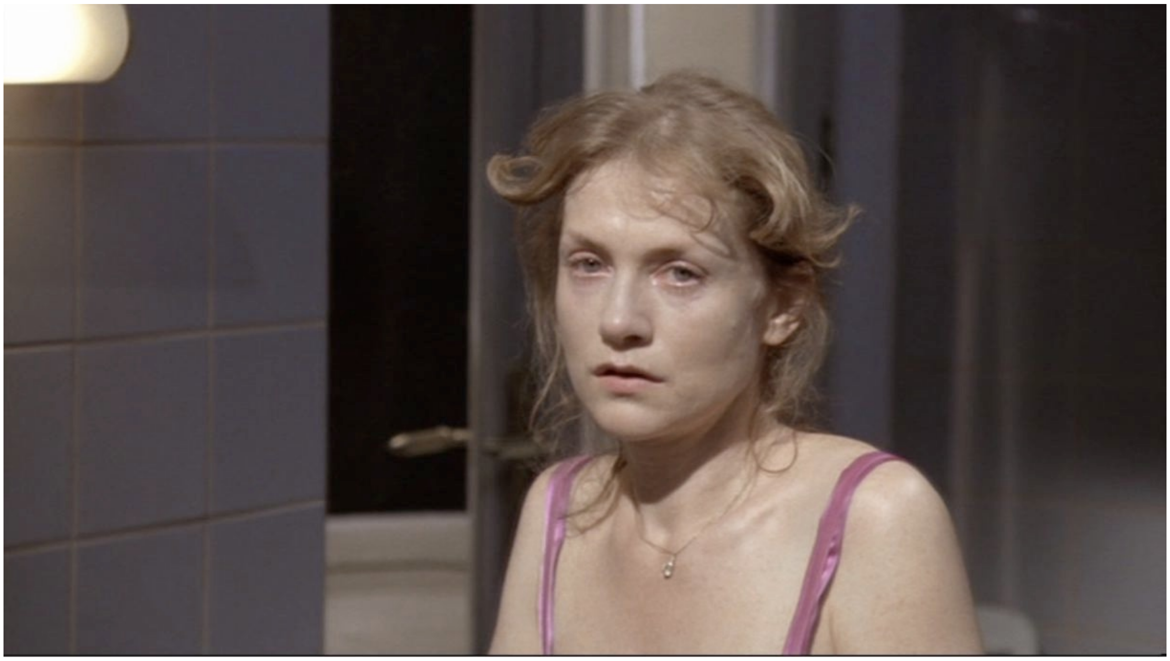

Fig. 3. Aesthetics of mirroring enable the protagonist to look at the spectator. *Malina*. Dir. Werner Schroeter. Perf. Isabelle Huppert, Mathieu Carriere, Can Togay. Concorde, 1990.

the film characters are looking. The screen as mirror here gains a new quality. It applies in two ways: the spectator is "reflected" in the images of others, whilst the film characters are also reflected on the screen as their mirror. The spectator thereby is placed in a new mirror relation to the film characters that do not act in a completely distinct realm anymore. Mirroring here is used to destabilize the interiority/exteriority antithesis predominant in classical narrative cinema.

As the scene continues, a gendered order of spectatorship is reiterated: while the female protagonist is constantly looking at her own mirror image, Malina keeps looking back and forth between her and her reflection in the mirror. Both of their gazes define the female body images as *to-be-looked-at,* echoing the earlier scene with the pocket mirror. This time, however, the gender-specific performances of the gaze culminate in a direct address of the spectator: at the end of the scene, Malina leaves the room (and the image), while the woman follows him with her eyes. However, she does not turn around, but rather keeps facing the screen as mirror. Due to the aesthetics of mirroring, her gaze is suddenly directed at the viewer. A detail shot of the slamming door is followed by an even closer shot of her face that intensifies her looking (see fig. 3).

This choreography of looking and its cinematographic staging by means of mirroring blur the distinction between spectator and cinematic space, undermining the dichotomies set up by mainstream narrative film. The gaze of the film character breaks through the screen and claims a status equal to that of the viewer. The latter is not only behind the diegetic mirror, but is transformed into a mirror image to the transgressive female gaze. The woman has discovered and appropriated a new mirror: the screen. By looking at the spectator, she claims as her own that mirror that was previously reserved for the viewer. The latter experiences that from now on, the screen as mirror of pleasurable phantasms is no longer reliable. The protagonist and spectator are placed in a mirror relation of mutual looking. This new mirror relation sidesteps any dichotomies established by mainstream narrative cinema. The film avoids both a reproduction and a mere reversal of subject-object hierarchies. By blurring the very distinction of interiority and exteriority, the scene instead effects a displacement of these binaries.

Another finesse of Schroeter's aesthetics of mirroring consists in its ambivalence. Gazes and mirror relations initially are motivated diegetically (insofar as the protagonist is looking at Malina), before they are superimposed with gestures of transgression of the cinematic space (since she is also looking at the spectator). The displacement of the dichotomous boundary between diegesis and the outside of film, effected by the protagonist's transgressive presence, in turn is called into question by the possibility of reading the events in terms of narrative. The status of the film character and the destabilized position of the spectator remain suspended until they are further negotiated later in the film.

With regard to Bachmann's text, the woman's looking at the spectator can be considered as a cinematic response to the first-person narration of the prose text. As discussed in the previous chapter, Bachmann's first-person narration is crucial to her negotiation of gender, as this form of focalization makes it possible to leave the narrator's gender unspecified at the beginning of the text (see ch. 2).[38] Bachmann's suspension of gender identity at the outset of her text poses particular problems for adaptations into visual media. In contrast to literature, film relies on the presence of bodies. Specific performers have to be chosen that fill the indeterminacies of the literary text (Stam 55). The film adaptation of *Malina* turns Bachmann's first-person narrator in to an object to the viewers' eyes (Burdorf 97). In Schroeter's adaptation, actress Isabelle Huppert's body and voice fill in the indeterminacies of Bachmann's narrator. Thus, readers of Bachmann experience a loss of their phantasmic relation to the indeterminate gender of the unnamed first-person narrator upon viewing the film adaptation, whereby they inevitably lose the opportunity to identify with a un-gendered voice or a voice "before" gender.

First-person narration might seem absent in the film adaptation of *Malina* also because the film avoids typical techniques of miming this narrative perspective in cinema. Adaptations that seek to integrate first-person narration often involve voice-over, creating the off-screen presence of a narrator who comments on the events. For instance, the film adaptation of Chuck Palahniuk's novel *Fight Club*, directed by David Fincher based on the screenplay by Jim Uhls, as well as Stanley Kubrick's film adaptation of Anthony Burgess's novel *A Clockwork Orange*, make use of this technique to deliver passages from the adapted first-person narration. Schroeter's film largely refrains from voice-over narration, as well as from inserting titles—another technique that mime literariness, namely the titles of book chapters, with cinematic means.

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[38] Instead, Bachmann's narrator quotes information from her passport, skipping the categories of male and female. It is not until she starts explaining her relationship with Malina that she takes on a gendered identity (see ch. 2).

However, the film involves other innovative strategies to respond to the focalization of Bachmann's text in its own audio-visual language. It is through the visual means of the transgressive gaze of the protagonist in the bathroom scene that the presence of an "I" is created: by addressing the spectator with her looking, the woman is not contained within the diegesis anymore, but rather blurs the boundaries between diegesis and the level of enunciation. In addition to undermining expectations of *to-be-looked-at-ness*, she participates in a dialogical relationship with the spectator that is comparable to the direct address of readers by a first-person narrator. Her looking undermines the norms of the iconic spectacle of women on screen, turning the 'she is there' of mainstream cinema into an 'I am here.' This media-specific response to the protagonist's role as first-person narrator in the prose text both stresses and displaces cinema's traditional containment of women's gazes and voices. This instance of mirroring, which mediates the protagonist's looking at the spectator, responds to Bachmann's critique of discursive constraints of literary production with a critique of discursive constraints specific to its own medium. Moreover, this mirror effect suggest the protagonist's agency in determining the boundaries of the story, which will be more and more foregrounded throughout the film.

The imagery of mirroring is also extended through an imagery of water and fluidity, present throughout the whole film. In the bathroom scene, Malina is washing the woman's face. The skin as bodily border is diluted in the literal and metaphorical sense; the woman's soaked and softened skin provides an image that problematizes visual presence. The woman's transgressive look at the spectator will come from this diluted face, superimposing the blurring of spatial with that of corporeal boundaries.

The imagery of fluidity is already introduced during the opening credits of the film by a river with opposing currents. The names of the actors appear as part of the opening credits in front of this image, placing it at the threshold between the non-diegetic exteriority (i.e., the realm shared by the actors and spectators) and the interiority of the diegesis (i.e., the realm where the events take place). Due to this marked position and the recurrence of fluidity and mirroring throughout the film, this early image of the currents can be read in terms of mirroring. Beside the reflective quality that water shares with mirrors, it also provides an image of mobility, unstable matter, and diluted boundaries.[39] The movement of the water retrospectively foreshadows the fluid screen that is turned into a two-way mirror throughout the film.

A scene that follows shortly after the bathroom scene further establishes the aesthetics of mirroring by involving a diegetic stand-in of the spectator (00:34:00-00:34:50). The character, a stranger, is sitting behind the woman on her left hand side and keeps looking at her while she is having a meal with her lover Ivan. However, after a shot showing Ivan, the strange man suddenly appears to sit on the other side. His behavior is bizarre as well: sitting very close to her, he keeps staring right at her face while she is talking to her partner. The stranger's look makes him a double of the spectator of the film who is watching the character and following the events as a usually invisible voyeur. Spectators see themselves seeing; moreover, as man openly indulges in his curiosity and craving for sensation, spectators are confronted with an unflattering doppelgänger that mocks their spectatorship and adds an element of disquiet.

The way in which the stranger's appearance is presented once more causes disorientation. Camera and editing violate the norms of continuity, depriving the spectators of any sense of where exactly the stranger might be sitting. Finally, the setting is illuminated by a medium wide shot that provides an overview of the situation. The background of the image now reveals a diegetic mirror in the wall, in which the stranger is reflected. As diegetic element, the mirror lends itself for a belated explanation of the disorienting series of shots. In order to make sense of this series, some of the contradictory impressions must be retrospectively read as mirror images. The screen has turned into a double mirror again, echoing both the bathroom scene and the image of the currents in the opening credits. The spectators, looking to reconcile the sequence of shots with their ideas of space, are lured into a visual puzzle: the scene requires the spectators to accept those aesthetics of mirroring that will finally effect a loss of their habitual gaze throughout the film.

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[39] In his two-volume study on fascism and misogyny, *Male Fantasies*, Klaus Theweleit argues that "the fear of/desire for fusion, ideas of dismemberment, the dissolution of ego boundaries, the blurring of object relationships" (206) are at the center of fascism. In his analysis of the militaristic culture of the Freikorps, Theweleit identifies a phobia against flows, which are associated with women. Against this backdrop, issues surrounding both gender and violence intersect in the imagery of fluidity in the film adaptation of *Malina.* The film's realm with its series of wet female bodies and gestures of dilution, in addition to transgressive gazes and unstable spaces, must be a proper "chamber of horrors" to any gaze seeking to reassure itself of the firmness of bodies.

In contrast to the scene in the bathroom, none of the images in the restaurant scene can be unambiguously identified as the mirror image of another. Due to the fast succession of shots showing the stranger from different perspectives, it remains opaque which one of these shots is a mirror image. These cinematographic strategies make it impossible to differentiate between an “original” and a derivative mirror image. Instead, the film confuses images of different orders of representation, the film image and the mirror image in film, suspending their distinction.

In the restaurant scene, mirroring again is involved in referencing the idea of a male gaze. The dialog between the woman and Ivan deals with the appearance of women. Ivan, while holding the protagonist’s hand, says: “The age of a woman shows on her hands.” His statement articulates a culturally established view of the female body that dictates ideals of beauty—here that of youth. The staring of the stranger, however, exaggerates this judgmental attention for the appearance of women in a grotesque manner, criticizing the gaze of both Ivan and the spectator by means of caricature. The aesthetics of mirroring here support this critical caricature with their displacement of habitual gazes and orders of representation.

The film adaptation of *Malina* also responds to the act of writing in Bachmann's text, translating it into a moment of spectatorship and filmmaking. Roughly midway through the film, the female protagonist of Schroeter's film goes to the movies: a scene that was not included in Bachmann's text takes place in a film theater, showing the protagonist as a film viewer (starting at 00:47:18). The animation film that is shown in the movie theater soon turns into a film about a princess. The tale refers to a story embedded in the book: Bachmann's first-person narrator envisions writing the story of the princess as a fantasy of escape ("Die Prinzessin von Kagran").[40] Instead of reiterating how the protagonist writes this tale, the film depicts how the protagonist projects the tale of the princess in a phantasmic act onto a movie screen.

Strikingly enough, while this act of writing is transposed into a moment of filmmaking, passages from the text that directly address filmmaking are not adapted. Filmmaking appears most prominently in Bachmann's *Malina* in the context of traumatic dreams. In one of these dreams, her father is tricking her into a compromising position, videotaping her against her will (see ch. 2). Thus, the father's filmmaking is as a tool for her victimization. In the film adaptation, however, these scenes are omitted. Rather, the protagonist appears as a “filmmaker” in that she is the producer of her own fantasized film images. In addition to translating an act of writing from Bachmann’s prose into an instance of filmmaking, the film references victimizing effects of filmmaking as having been overcome, rearticulating its own cinematic medium into a means of the protagonist’s self-expression.

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[40] Before starting the narration, she contemplates: "Verstecken könnte ich mich in der Legende einer Frau, die es nie gegeben hat" (*Malina* 67). — "[I] would be able to hide myself in the legend of a woman who never existed" (*Malina. A Novel* 36).

With regard to the film’s aesthetics of mirroring, it is first and foremost the spatial arrangement in the film theater on screen that is striking: the diegetic audience members on the screen, among them the protagonist, are shown in a profile view. However, they are not facing the screen of the theater. While the characters are looking toward the right margin of the film image, the diegetic screen is visible to the side of them.

Due to this implausible spatial arrangement, the screen of the film theater is stressed as a double of the screen that we face as spectators of the film *Malina*. The parallel arrangement creates a mirror relation between these two screens that plays to the effects of mirroring in previous scenes: in addition to the stand-ins of the spectator of the film *Malina* who populate the screen, the screen itself has a doppelgänger in Schroeter’s *Malina*. No longer does the screen provide a separation between diegetic and non-diegetic realms. Rather, it is involved in the events. In this mobilization of the screen, the very distinction between a narrative space and its exteriority is done away with.

The appropriation of the screen as mirror as performed by the protagonist in the bathroom scene here is reiterated, but with a variation. While she had previously mobilized the screen in order to look at herself and the spectator, she now is mirroring the spectator insofar as she takes a seat in a double of the cinematic apparatus.

The profile view of the audience underpins an uncanny effect: the spectator looks at unknowing spectators that seem to feel invisible. Identifying at the same time with the camera eye and with the unaware audience on the screen, the spectators' phantasy of being "all-perceiving subjects" is destabilized. However, once the screen does not show the fictive audience anymore but only the film-within-the-film, the spectator is presented with a point-of-view shot from the perspective of the protagonist. In this film, she starts seeing herself, Malina, and her father as characters. This suggests that the screen is showing her fantasies, which puts her in an author-like position. The spectator is made to share her vision, effectively experiencing the woman's gaze and her apparently successful wish-fulfillment in the theater.

In addition to the film's referencing of the princess's tale, questions of authorship are also at issue with regard to the character of the protagonist's secretary. Bachmann had already called her protagonist Fräulein Jellinek. In the adaptational process, the screenplay based on Bachmann's text was written by author Elfriede Jelinek. Thus, the adaptation charges the figure of the secretary Jellinek with new meaning, as she becomes a reference to the author of the screenplay. Jelinek herself understands her own writing, her prose and plays, as descending from the writings of Bachmann. In her afterword to the 2006 special edition of Bachmann's *Malina* entitled "Der Krieg mit anderen Mitteln: Über Ingeborg Bachmann,"[41] Jelinek describes the prose text as a turning point in a lineage of women writers. Stressing the critique of patriarchy and violence in *Malina*, Jelinek calls Bachmann the first woman in German-speaking post-war literature who "described with radically poetic means the ongoing impact of the war, . . . of the destruction of society, in the relationships between man and woman" (2006, transl. Christina Mandt). She inscribed her position as Bachmann's literary heiress in the character of the secretary.

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[41] Jelinek was asked to write an essay about Bachmann's *Malina* by the editor in chief in the arts and culture department of the "Spiegel" magazine, Hellmuth Karasek, in 1985. The essay was received and paid for by the "Spiegel," but never published. It appeared for the first time as an afterword to the 2006 special edition of the DVD *Malina*, where Jelinek also added a note on its history.

In that manner, the cinematic response to the text also affects the latter's meaning, reframing the character of the secretary as a stand-in of Elfriede Jelinek for contemporary readers. In the first chapter, I have suggested disregarding the chronologies of the "source novel" and the adaptation as "derivative," reconsidering adaptation as an intermedial constellation, in which different versions of one "work" become equal in status. Within the dialogical constellation of the prose text *Malina* and the film, the character of the secretary becomes a metaphor for adaptation in both text and film. The most important responsibility of a secretary is to transmit the communications of the employer. In this way, transmission as a possible metaphor for adaptation is inscribed into the film. In turn, the adaptation allows us to consider the text as one that already involves questions surrounding adaptation. In the prose text, the devotion of the secretary Jellinek fades after she gets married and spends less time at work, leaving the protagonist worrying about her letter correspondence (381). For the film, author Jelinek "jumps in," taking up the role of the secretary by writing the screenplay based on Bachmann's writing. The appearance of a Jelinek doppelgänger as Fräulein Jellinek in the film becomes a cinematic response to Bachmann's references to letter writing. Author Jelinek, taking care of the narrator's "correspondence," treats Bachmann's text as a message that is to be delivered from one medium to another, facilitating this transmission by writing the screenplay.

The cinematic adaptation also picks up on the tape recorder that appears in Bachmann's *Malina*. A film scene with the recorder also rewrites the role that the recorder plays in the literary text. Bachmann's first-person narrator delivers her account of an interview with a reporter. The latter uses a voice recorder to capture her responses, repeatedly erasing her unwelcome statements. As discussed in the previous chapter, the narrator cites all of her statements in her account of the situation, using the literary medium in order to preserve what had been erased from the voice recording. The film rewrites this moment of the recuperation of her own voice with media-specific means: the voice recorder appears in the hands of the protagonist, who is listening to her own voice. The scene thereby points to the auditory dimension of both the technology of cinema and the latter's representational traditions surrounding women and their voices.

The protagonist's experiments with image and sound address questions of authorship and discursive authority, pointing to the various levels of the cinematic medium. The protagonist's interactions with mirrors, which I have shown destabilize traditional visual orders, have an equivalent on the sound level: the woman's experiments with her own voice recordings. Right after the aforementioned bathroom scene, the protagonist is shown using a tape recorder, rewinding and playing a recording of her own voice. Bearing in mind Kaja Silverman's analysis of the female voice in mainstream cinema, this moment displaces mainstream cinema's tendency to show women's voices to be tied to their bodies and contained within the diegesis: according to Silverman, female voice-overs hardly ever inhabit a different location than within the diegesis (56-61). Rather, female voices are often presented in the form of involuntary utterances with less discursive authority than male voices, or as being overheard by male characters (see ch. 1). In the film *Malina*, the tape recorder explains the presence of the voice (i.e., containing the voice within the diegesis). However, the protagonist is shown to explore and manipulate her own voice and the technology through which it is mediated, suggesting her ability to manipulate her own cinematic representation. She thus gives the impression of occupying herself with her own voice as an acoustic "mirror image," playfully exploring and manipulating its technological mediation. Insofar as the overhearing of other characters' voices constitutes a quasi extra-diegetic position, the protagonist, through meditating on the authorial quality of her voice, here contemplates her ability to move beyond the boundaries of diegesis. I will return to this idea of her transgression of diegesis towards the end the chapter (and film).

In the second half of the film, the instances of mirroring involve manifold variations of reflection and doubling, finally culminating in the last appearance of the woman. Among the most striking mirror effects are those involved in the ballroom scene (starting at 01:17:00). After all of the other dancers have left, the protagonist finds herself alone dancing with the opera singer who had accompanied the music. They are dancing with each other, until they finally sink to the ground and close their eyes.

In an interplay of acting and cinematography, a mirror relation is suggested between the protagonist and the singer. While they are facing each other, their motions seem mechanic. The fact that these motions are synchronized makes them appear to be mutually dependent, underlining the impression of a mirror relation between the two women. Their mutual looking at each other resembles to some degree the protagonist's interaction with Malina during the scene with the pocket mirror: she again faces another person's looking, this time that of a woman, whereby a stronger mirror relation between the two characters is suggested. Their exchange of gazes echoes with both the protagonist's confrontation with both Malina and the pocket mirror.

Adding another dimension of mirroring to this exchange of looks, an ornamented frame appears on the left and right margins of the film image. The *mise-en-cadre* shows this frame only in part, making it impossible to decide whether we see the frame of a mirror or that of a door in the similarly ornamented room. Moreover, camera perspective and shot size add to the impression of a mirror image. The decorated frame doubles the framing of the film image, problematizing framing in cinema by pointing to the very practice of *cadrage.* Since it remains unclear whether the frame is part of a mirror or a door (meaning whether the two women appear in a mirror or a different room), the image conveys the sense that mirrors *are* doors. Thus, the scene reiterates the idea that mirrors open up spaces that do not follow the rules of the cinematic space in mainstream narrative film—an idea that recurs throughout the film.

Before and after the ballroom scene, Malina and the female protagonist encounter each other within an arrangement of windows. The semi-circular set-up of the windows and the reflections of the flames of burning candles in the glass panels prefigure the arrangement of mirrors and flames at the end of the film. Furthermore, these windows echo the presence of windows in other scenes of the film. Reconsidered in the context of the film's transgressive strategies, windows point to the increasing transparency of the screen that used to shield the spectator. Windows in *Malina* thereby do not only open up diegetic spaces, they also point to the opening up of the cinematic space as such.

One of the most striking mirror instances appears during one of the encounters between Malina and the female protagonist in this semi-circular arrangement of windows (01:19:24-01:19:45). The image centers on the arrangement of windows and the two characters that are arguing. A mirror is shown on the left margin that is opposing another mirror (see fig. 4). The woman desperately asks Malina to follow her, shouting: "I beg you, come!" As soon as the two characters exit the scene on the right margin of the image, a mise en abyme appears in the mirror on the left—an infinite reproduction of the a mirror image between two mirrors. Doubled mirroring here opens up a new space that

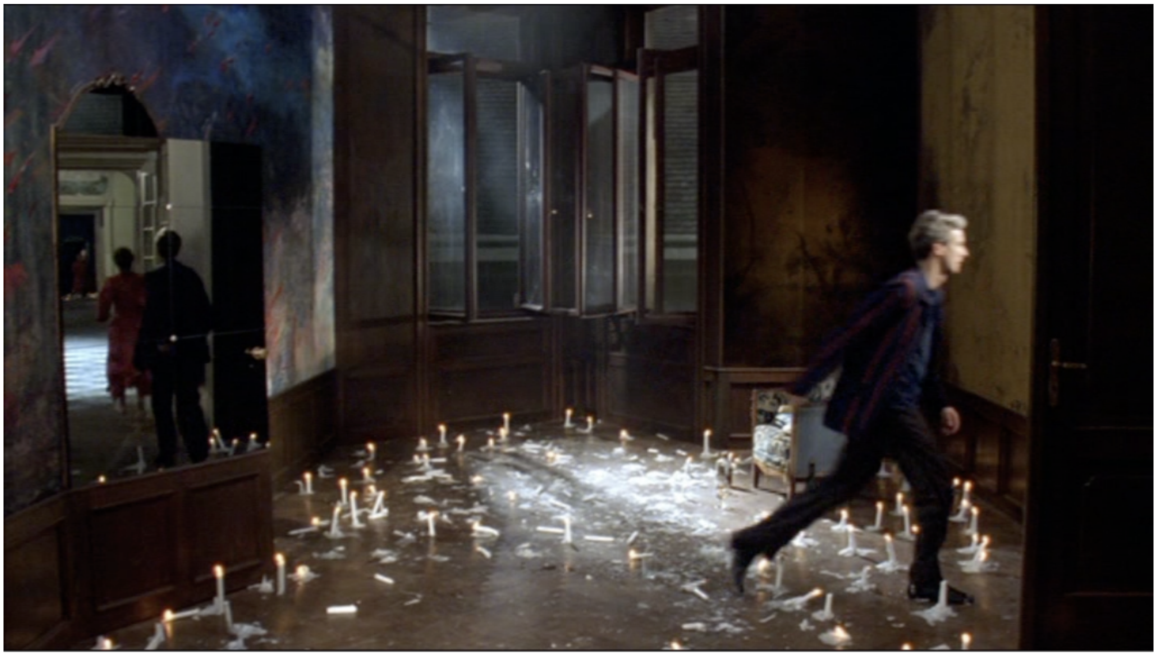

Fig. 4. An arrangement of windows and doubled mirroring open up the cinematic space. *Malina*. Dir. Werner Schroeter. Perf. Isabelle Huppert, Mathieu Carriere, Can Togay. Concorde, 1990. DVD.

comes into being merely between mirrors. This recursive mirroring of the mise en abyme tells of events that are alternative to the characters' exit: the mise en abyme is where the characters become visible as soon as they leave the arrangement of windows. We come to understand that the place where the woman wants to take him is the space in the mirrors. She goes ahead and appears to be mirrored in a dual manner: doubled by another mirror, she seems to run toward herself. The multi-track medium here superimposes the conflict in the verbal dialog with the visual impression of a euphoric gesture: mirroring within mirroring creates the impression that the woman is removing herself from her male alter ego in order to rush up to herself within a new visual cosmos.

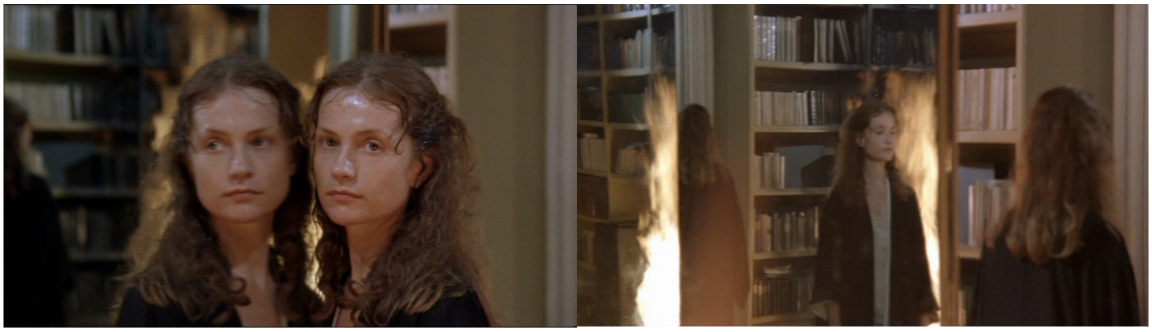

Fig. 5 & 6. The protagonist's last appearance in an arrangement of mirrors. *Malina*. Dir. Werner Schroeter. Perf. Isabelle Huppert, Mathieu Carriere, Can Togay. Concorde, 1990. DVD.

Retrospectively, the window arrangement involving the mise en abyme appears to be a prefiguration of the final mirror instance toward the end of the film. The protagonist makes her last appearance within an arrangement of mirrors (01:51:12-01:56:54). The image of the semi-circular set-up of reflecting panels refers to that of the windows, merging the image of the window with that of the mirror. In the final mirror instance, a portrait shot at first shows the woman's face doubled by a mirror (see fig. 5). When she starts to step back from the mirror, the camera slowly moves away from her, exposing an arrangement of mirrors. In this arrangement, the woman and the flames that surround her are reflected from different perspectives, until she finally disappears (see fig. 6).

By comparison to the end of the prose text, a shift in the imagery is striking. Disregarding the significance of mirroring, the woman's disappearance in the film has been perceived as the failure of the female subject in accordance with Bachmann (e.g. Bartsch 1994, Komar 1994, Boa 1994). The end of Bachmann's text, however, does not involve any mirrors, but rather elaborates on the image of a crack in the wall in order to stage the woman's disappearance: "I have walked over to the wall, I am walk into the wall, holding my breath. I should have written a note: It wasn't Malina. But the wall opens up, I am inside the wall, and Malina can only see the fissure we've been looking at for such a long time. He'll think I've left the room" (*Malina* 223).[42] The passage describes the woman's fading away as her moving into a crack in the wall. Although the motif of the crack in the wall reappears in the film's final sequences, the imagery surrounding her last appearance is changed dramatically. It is within mirrors that she is visible one last time before she leaves the scene.

This shift from the image of the wall to an imagery of mirroring has consequences for the role of space in the woman's disappearance. Walls separate and limit rooms; mirrors, however, create visual effects that seemingly open up walls and spatial borders. In Bachmann's prose, the crack in the wall, though such an opening, is not rendered as an opportunity to transgress boundaries, but rather a one-way path: the crack leads the protagonist to disappear inside of the wall as a place of no return, which has prompted readings of the scene as one of total isolation: "Steps, Malina's incessant steps, quieter steps, the most quiet footsteps. A standing still. No alarm, no sirens. No one comes to help. Not the ambulance nor the police. It is a very old wall, a very strong wall, from which no one can fall, which no one can break open, from which nothing scan ever be heard again. It was murder" (*Malina* 224-225).[43]

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[42] "Ich bin in die Wand gegangen, ich gehe in die Wand, ich halte den Atem an. Ich hätte noch auf einen Zettel schreiben müssen: Es war nicht Malina. Aber die Wand tut sich auf, ich bin in der Wand, und für Malina kann nur der Riß zu sehen sein, den wir schon lange gesehen haben. Er wird denken, daß ich aus dem Zimmer gegangen bin" (*Malina* 391).

Evoking the image of a suppressed voice (Komar 94), the text evokes the trope of silence —one of the central tropes in the discourse on women writers. Being inside of the wall then would describe a marginal and fatal position. The disappearance in the "very old" wall has often been interpreted along the lines of what Komar calls the "socially constructed wall of male language and patriarchal social exclusion" (94).

In the adaptation, however, the crack in the wall only briefly appears en route to the woman's final appearance in the arrangement of mirrors. In the context of the film's aesthetics of mirroring, this moment does not simply provide an image of disappearance. Rather, it is the moment in which all of the destabilizing effects developed throughout the film culminate: up to this point, mirroring has been established as a productive force that made the spatial border of the screen mobile, blurring the boundaries between characters and spectators, subjects and objects of gazes, as well as cinematic space and its exteriority. On the fluid screen, the woman's final appearance in the doubling of mirror images is a moment of multiplication of her presence as counter-image to her silence and invisibility in the text.

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[43] "Schritte, immerzu Malinas Schritte, leiser die Schritte, leiseste Schritte. Ein Stillstehen. Kein Alarm, keine Sirenen. Es kommt niemand zu Hilfe. Der Rettungswagen nicht und nicht die Polizei. Es ist eine sehr alte, eine sehr starke Wand, aus der niemand fallen kann, die niemand aufbrechen kann, aus der nie mehr etwas laut werden kann. / Es war Mord" (*Malina* 393).

As a point of culmination of the aesthetics of mirroring in Schroeter's film, the last mirror instance performs a revision of the film image as such. The appearance of the mirrors in the middle of the woman’s apartment is not motivated in terms of plausibility, but rather performs a radical transgression of narrative and norms of causality and continuity. Moreover, the mirrors are arranged in a manner that leaves their frames, and thus their boundaries, invisible. Instead, the reflecting panels are arranged to take up the whole screen, effectively cutting the film image into fragments.

The flickering flames that appear during the scene stress the kaleidoscopic effects. The light of the fire reflects in the mirroring panels, adding with their motion to the impression of visual multiplication. Moreover, various connotations coincide in the image of the flame. On the one hand, the flames point to radical destruction, suggesting a revolutionary force of the image that goes against established cinematic codes. On the other hand, the flames also refer to the motif of the phoenix rising from the ashes, rendering the moment of the protagonist’s disappearance as one of transition and rebirth.

This revision of the film image through fragmentation seems to be directed by the female protagonist. The initial portrait shot of her doubled face is sending a final gaze toward the viewer, suggesting that this moment is the conclusion to her previous transgressions. Then, the woman’s slow turning around seems to direct the camera movement, which finally allows for the arrangement of mirrors to appear. The fragmentation of the image thereby is staged as an effect of the woman’s actions. The film culminates in the staging of an agency of the protagonist to manipulate her own image. Moreover, she has the ability to mobilize the discursive constraints of her own representation.

The woman disappears from the film, but she does not fail. She leaves the film via mirroring, and in so doing, undoes her constitution as film image. The kaleidoscopic effects she produces are in stark contrast to earlier moments where the protagonist was caught up in her own mirror image. Rather, the film's aesthetics of mirroring here culminate in the protagonist's own revision of visual codes, turning the cinema's screen into an interface for her self-articulation.

By leaving cinema toward the end of the film, the woman keeps her body image from providing narrative closure. The significance of this moment becomes evident when we recall one of the most central questions in the theoretical writings of Teresa de Lauretis: the question of how to create a presence of women in cinema that undermines mythical traditions of male-subject-hero stories. In response to Mulvey's analysis of cinema's organization of sexual difference, de Lauretis elaborates on Oedipal story trajectories in mainstream cinema, in which 'Woman' traditionally provides narrative closure (see ch. 1). The film *Malina* transcends this construction of gender binaries in cinema by refraining from both traditional plots and from a simple reversal of traditional dichotomies, e.g. in the form of a narrative with a female hero. Instead, the mirror-world of *Malina* blurs the very dichotomies upon which the institutional mode of cinema rests, renouncing the construction of other narrative units, such as proper characters, events, as well as a coherent time and space. Finally, the fragmentation of the image in the last mirror instance denies closure via female body image.

On the contrary, the fragmented film image at the end of *Malina* is a counter-figure to that of the narrative image. Fragmentation here rewrites the traditional moment of restoration and containment of the presence of women, opening up an exit to the visual. Re-read against the backdrop of the film, the disappearance of Bachmann's protagonist into the wall can indeed be considered in terms of traditional mechanisms of closure and containment. Thus, the film's aesthetics do not only displace the traditional journey of the hero in cinema, but also the failure of the protagonist and the figures of containment in Bachmann's text. Instead, the shattered film image becomes the site of a female protagonist's performance of agency: taking up the role of the film's enunciator that controls the film, the female protagonist takes apart the discursive constraints of narrative media.

Underpinning the protagonist's mobilization of the screen, her alter ego, Malina, also exits the cinematic space. In the very last shot of the film, he is moving directly toward the spectator. By means of his gaze and movement, his former function as stand-in of the spectators gaze is shifted; instead, he creates a mirror relationship of mutual looking between himself and the spectator in the same manner that has previously been modeled by the female protagonist. Played out by a fade to black, the film image finally collapses into his body image. Malina simultaneously eliminates his own image and the screen.

In conclusion, the adaptation of *Malina* stands in a dialogical relation with Bachmann's text in so far as the film responds to the prose text with reflections on its own medium of cinema. Excerpts from the prose text incorporate the struggle of

Bachmann's protagonist with the constraints of literary writing into the screenplay. The intermedial performance of the adaptation, however, re-contextualizes this struggle and translates the question of discursive constraints into the apparatus of cinema: in the film, mainstream narrative cinema's boundaries are both referenced and diluted between the spectator and the characters on-screen as well as between gendered subjects and objects by dint of mirrors and reflections. This mobilization of discursive constraints more and more appears to be the effect of the protagonist's agency to manipulate her own cinematic representation. Finally, she fragments the film image, disappearing while conveying the sense that cinema's screen turns into a fluid interface for her own self-articulation.

The fluid screen of *Malina* has important consequences for questions of gender performance. Narrative fiction in cinema had contributed to constructions of gender identities as positions within a regime of looking. The aesthetics of *Malina,* however, effect a dissolution of the boundary between looking and *being-looked-at*, and thereby between cinematic codes of masculinity and femininity. Rather than a gendered technology, cinema is—in the words of de Lauretis (see ch. 1)—a technology of gender, meaning that it shapes the ongoing construction of gender concepts beyond the screen.

The film *Malina* displaces the cinematic apparatus as technology of binary gender concepts, staging instead the development of an alternative practice. Reworking the system of the look that had constructed women as image and the gaze as male, the film suggests that we can project ourselves into the protagonist's gaze and agency over the discursive construction of gender, reorganizing the technologies we know into interfaces that allow for new experiences and identities. The collapse of realist narrative cinema into a realm of mirroring and fluidity unavailable to the verbal medium of the prose text allows us to fantasize an exit from systems that produce binary difference. That makes *Malina* a technology of undoing gender.

4 Desiring Narrative: Kafka's *The Trial* as Process

The beginning of Kafka's *The Trial* is downright cinematic. Gazes mediate the events. Josef K., still in his bed, lets his eyes wander only to become aware that all eyes are on him: when he looks out of the window of his bedroom, the narrator conveys his point of view while K. crosses looks with an old female neighbor. By realizing that the woman observes him from the distance, K. finds himself to be the object of the woman's spectatorship, a spectacle catering to her curiosity and entertainment. The onset of the text interrelates questions surrounding intermediality, exchanges of looks, and gender relations. Following these leads, I will discuss how gender concepts, spatial arrangements, and quasi-cinematic visual exchanges work together to reflect on narrative tradition in *The Trial.*

In the last fifteen years, the scholarly interest in what could be termed "Kafka and cinema" has dramatically increased. Since Bettine Augustin's 1987-publication, which suggested that Kafka's visuality anticipates cinematic techniques (38, 56), and a more recent series of publications on the gaze in Kafka by Peter Beicken (see Beicken 1999a, 1999b, 2000), such scholarship on Kafka's visuality—often paired with discussions of biographic information on "Kafka and film"—has proliferated: this growing interest resulted for instance in an essay collection (Alt 2009), a book-length study on Kafka's relationship with early cinema (Brabandt 2009), and in an entry on film and photography in the most recent edition of Metzler's seminal Kafka-handbook (Duttlinger 2010).

Recent conference panels bear titles such as “Kafka: Time, Trial, and Cinema,”[44] “The Kafkaesque in Literature and Film,”[45] and “Kafka and Cinema.”[46] Meanwhile, it has become common knowledge in Kafka scholarship that instances of observation and perception give his texts a “cinematic texture and feel” (Beicken, “Kafka’s Cinematic Writing” 81) that allows for a reconsideration of third-person narrators’ descriptions in terms of camera movements and shot sequences.

Bianca Theisen suggests that Kafka projects the filmic medium into his prose in the form of paradoxical shifts between realism and the fantastic (545): “Kafka's narratives cross-cut the real and the fantastic in such a way as to call attention to the reality of the cut, as it is framed by fiction” (546). Theisen considers this quality of Kafka’s texts to be inspired by cinema’s technology due to the ways in which the latter relies on the cut: “It does not simply void the reality that the previous shot seemed to establish in order to then present a new one, but by coupling it with the next, possibly unrelated scene, it adds a different perspective to the previous shot, whose reality is thereby relativized and supplemented” (547).

Bearing in mind the fact that most of cinema takes the form of narrative fiction shaped by continuity editing, it has to be stressed that Theisen’s argument is primarily inspired by the cinema that was contemporary to Kafka. The cinematic quality Theisen attributes to Kafka’s writing is that of an early cinema’s “shock-value” that causes “bewilderment in its readers and necessitates different modes of observation” (546), involving montage that draws attention to films’ own mediality. Theisen likens such montage to Kafka’s use of gestures as a means that “makes visible its own mediality,” leading the audience to experience the “shock of seeing the reality of their own seeing framed by fiction” (549-550).

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[44] As part of this panel, the author of this study has presented a paper on “Gender in Adaptation: Franz Kafka’s *The Trial* and David Lynch’s *Inland Empire.*” German Studies Association Convention 2015.

[45] South Atlantic Modern Language Association 2015.

[46] German Studies Association Convention 2014.

Theisen’s comparison of Kafka’s writing to early cinema from the perspective of the audience’s reception bears consequences for my discussion of contemporary adaptations: Kafka references a “shock-value” of cinema’s technology, which was, however, glossed over by Hollywood’s narrative grammar throughout the 20th century. The potential of cinema’s technology, inscribed in Kafka’s texts, can be reanimated in contemporary cinematic adaptations. Such an adaptation would create an intermedial constellation reflecting on both the historical distance and proximity to Kafka, who turns to early film in order to oppose simple literary realism, and the later film adaptation that turns to Kafka in order to contrast his ‘cinematic’ work with mainstream cinema’s realism.

The clarity of Kafka's prose has also engendered comparisons with cinema. Kafka’s “vividly realistic depictions” (Williams 94) led critic Thomas Fritz to describe the effect of Kafka’s writing metaphorically as a film in readers’ heads (“Kino im Kopf,” 437). Moreover, the clarity of Kafka’s style is indebted to a “generational response to the rise of cinema” (Williams 94). Such negotiation of the literary medium in the face of cinema as the new medium of that time marks a moment of adaptation along the lines of my earlier definition: as a means of intermedial reflection, the adaptation of formal traits from one medium to another help reflect on the historicity of the "receiving" medium.

In the context of my analysis, the scholarly trend to deal with "Kafka and cinema" is revealing. The fact that Kafka frequently went to see films is well documented and discussed (see Brod 1960, Zischler 2003, Theisen 2016) but of minor interest in the context of my analysis, and so are speculations on how consciously Franz Kafka drew inspiration from films, or the distinction between early cinema's influence and anticipatory elements in his texts. More significant to my study is the very fact that analyses of Kafka's writings increasingly identify a characteristic visuality in Kafka's writing, framing this visuality by virtue of the notion of the cinematic. For instance, the discourse on gesture in Kafka is reframed in terms of their "concrete visuality" and a "quasi-cinematic technique" (Goebel 15). This methodological trend to revisit the epoch-making writer from an intermedial perspective partakes in a tendency beyond Kafka scholarship: scholars in the humanities are rethinking the relationship between various media in their field of study, implicitly accounting for the experience of shifting media relations and technological innovation in the late 20th and early 21st century. While ascribing to Kafka a cinematic writing that serves the purpose of addressing the changed dynamics of modern life a hundred years ago (see Hurst 1996, Theisen 2016), we reveal our own intermedial lens that is shaped by contemporary concerns, which we address through our "cinematizing" scholarly writing. Moreover, (film) theories that rearticulate gender difference in terms of visual interactions suggest that visuality in Kafka's writing should be central to any account of gender in *The Trail*. Thus, I seek to explore the productivity of a "cinematizing" approach for the analysis of gender in the text.

Such a "cinematizing" approach to Kafka's *The Trial* is present in the beginning, which foreshadows gender relations' significance in the text. While the first sentence of the text, which announces K.'s arrest, has made (literary) history, the three sentences that follow deserve close attention as well. Reconsidered in terms of Kafka's cinematic writing, these sentences show how protagonist Josef K. is staged as a spectacle:

> Someone must have slandered Josef K., for one morning, without having done anything wrong, he was arrested. His landlady, Frau Grubach, had a cook who brought him breakfast each day around eight, but this time, she didn't appear. That never happened before. K. waited a while longer, watching from his pillow the old woman who lived across the way, who was peering at him with a curiosity quite unusual for her; then, both put out and hungry, he rang.[47] (3)

Still in his pillows, Josef K. becomes aware of the "curiosity" of the neighbor. Peter Beicken, influenced by Laura Mulvey's concepts, discusses this encounter as a reversal of the traditional "male gaze" that seeks dominance by taking charge of objects of desire through voyeuristic and fetishistic looks ("Kafka's Gays" 10).[48] Since the woman is soon joined by an old man and a younger man who stands behind them in a "towering" manner, Beicken reads the group, to which K. refers as a "Gesellschaft" (the German word for both gathering and society) as "agents of a social gaze that keeps an eye on K." (ibid.): the family icon representing the "reproachful stare of the family" suggests K.'s position of an outsider in the "sexual hierarchy" of *The Trial* (11).[49] By tracing instances in which K. engages in fantasies concerning other males (3), Beicken arrives at the interpretation of *The Trial* as "a novel that pits the family and dominant heterosexual patriarchy against marginalized homo-eroticism" (10). Though he effectively limits the function of female figures to revealing a societal oppression of women in the name of heterosexual patriarchy (11), Beicken's observations stress K.'s non-conforming to stereotypical heterosexual masculinity.

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[47] "Jemand mußte Josef K. verleumdet haben, denn ohne daß er etwas Böses getan hätte, wurde er eines Morgens verhaftet. Die Köchin der Frau Grubach, seiner Zimmervermieterin, die ihm jeden Tag gegen acht Uhr früh das Frühstück brachte, kam diesmal nicht. Das war noch niemals geschehen. K. wartete noch ein Weilchen, sah von seinem Kopfkissen aus die alte Frau, die ihm gegenüber wohnte und die ihn mit einer an ihr ganz ungewöhnlichen Neugierde beobachtete, dann aber, gleichzeitig befremdet und hungrig, läutete er" (*Process* 9).

[48] Beicken suggests in another article that both *The Trial* and *The Castle* involve instances that show the male protagonist failing to have controlling visual power, whereby "male voyeurism" is subverted ("Kafka's Cinematic Writing" 91-92). In *The Castle*, Frieda invites K. to look through a peephole in order to see Klamm, who, however, is sleeping and remains immobile. Thus, K. "only gets an incomplete picture. For K. there is no visual domination. As if in an opaque frozen frame, Klamm becomes an enigma" (Beicken, "Kafka's Cinematic Writing" 91).

I suggest that this position of the outsider of heterosexual binaries forms part of a queering of dichotomous categories in general. The "window in the window" (Hauser 119, transl. C.M.) mediates an exchange of looks between the two neighbors, stressing the mutual nature of the encounter: the seeming moment of reversal is one of a mutual framing of the 30-year-old bachelor (in his bed) and the aged woman, blurring distinctions between spectator and spectacle, gendered stereotypes surrounding activity and passivity, as well as age-related ideas of desiring and desirability.

The unwanted spectators undermine K.'s attempt to appear self-confident and gain control over the events. K. tries to evade the unwanted look and set an end to the show (9, "Schaustellung"), but ends up screaming at the neighbors in vain (15). Given the complex implications of the exchange of gazes, the discomforting power of the "family icon" (Beicken, "Kafka's Gays" 11) is twofold: the group icon's power not only emerges from its reference to heterosexual norms, but also from the "queering" undertones it has as an obstacle to the protagonist's attempts to gain control over others' view along the lines of stereotypical masculinity.

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[49] An alternative reading would be that of Sigrid Hauser, who understands the neighbor's looking as a mere personification of an unknown surveilling gaze without considering any gender relations (118-119).

Cinematic writing here amplifies the ironizing effects of literary narrative perspective. Kafka's narrative perspective establishes the protagonist as the focalizer, whose perception often functions as "narrative camera" (Beicken, "Kafka's Cinematic Writing" 93); Kafka's textual strategies often resemble visual practices such as the moving camera, peep-hole voyeurism, and the surveilling gaze (ibid. 94). In addition to creating cinematic instances that weaken K.'s visual power, the narrator repeatedly undermines K.'s inflated self-view through commentary. Christopher Conti stresses this gap between protagonist and narrator, suggesting that the latter's use of free indirect discourse in particular treats the protagonist with irony. For instance, the opening sentence of the text states that "someone must have slandered Josef K." (*Trial*), revealing that in his own mind, K. has never wronged anyone in his whole life—an assumption that must seem unlikely and shows K. to be impervious to self-criticism (Conti 121). Thus, Josef K.'s self-perception is questioned from the start, suggesting that he is in fact not free of guilt. Moreover, K. only projects his guilt onto the court according to Conti (122),[50] reminding us that K. is an "arrogant banker who puts work before all else, browbeats his landlady, sexually harasses a fellow lodger, neglects his ailing mother and impressionable niece, and breathes not a second's hesitation at the propriety of his conduct"—facts disregarded in scholarship that frames K. as "the victim in flight from the menace of bureaucratized modernity" (100-101).

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[50] Conti even suggests that the court is trying to help K., counter to persistent interpretations in scholarship (123).

Cinematic writing and narrative focalization highlight how readers are put in the position to observe K.'s actions and thoughts. Writes Conti: "The novel's blinding clarity unfolds from a failure of character. Readers are invited to witness it from K.'s repressed perspective but enjoined to judge it like members of the court" (119-120). Thus, the text's strategies of focalization undermine K.'s control in a way similar to that of the unwanted spectators: free indirect discourse grants readers an (unwelcome) insight into K.'s character. K.'s struggle for visual power is one for control over the narrative, while readers watch him like curious neighbors, undermining his power to focalize the text and reading process. Thus, K.'s consciousness of his potential visibility at any moment (Shah 173), his plan to "always be prepared, never let himself be caught by surprise, not look unsuspectingly" (705) is not only meant to protect him against the court, but also against his "surveillance" by the readers of the text.

Moreover, the beginning of *The Trial* foregrounds gender relations throughout this exchange of looks. K. is shown to be entangled in interactions with women. Though the first woman to appear on scene, the old neighbor is not the first woman to find mention in *The Trial*. The first sentences introduce a total of three female figures. A cook ("Köchin," 9), identified as female by the German suffix, fails to serve K., and therefore is responsible for the first disturbance of his daily routine. K. spends his life under the roof of the second woman mentioned in the text, his landlady Frau Grubach. As we learn later, Frau Grubach let in the strange men that declare K. is arrested. Both of these women's actions are the reason why K. has to wait in his bed, causing him to look around only to cross the look of the third woman, the neighbor. Accordingly, K. is "both put out and hungry" (3), responding at the same time to the unexpected look and the meal (i.e., the missing motherly care and service).

The female figures put K. on the spot and frame the position of the readers of the text. It appears that all of these women work together—consciously or coincidentally—to set the stage and turn K. into a spectacle. While the first two women contribute to K. being stuck, the third one is able to observe K., waiting for the next move—just like *The Trial*'s readers. In the form of the neighbor, readers of the text encounter a stand-in, mirroring their readership in terms of looking: just like the neighbor, we observe K., curiously enjoying the entertainment provided by K.'s cluelessness and ensuing arrest. Bearing in mind Silverman's discussion of the trope of women being "overseen/ overheard" by men from a quasi extra-diegetic level (see ch. 1), the text runs counter to the tradition of reiterating this trope, showing an old women in a position that allows her to observe the male protagonist. The text thus involves readers in this gaze that conflicts with traditional gender binaries in spectatorship.

In addition to the neighbor, the narrator or "camera" turns the male protagonist into a spectacle to readers, undermining him as the text's focalizer through subtle commentary. Readers are invited to oscillate between various looks, whose interplay transgresses gender- and age-related hierarchies: the perspective of K. as the focalizing figure who wants to establish his visual and narrative power, the voyeurism of the neighbor who is not framed as an image but engages K. in an exchange of looks and mutual framing, and the commentary of the narrator, who ironizes K.'s perspective.

In some respects, the first scene of *The Trial* resembles the initial situation of *The Metamorphosis*. The first sentences of both texts show striking similarities: "Someone must have slandered Josef K., for one morning, without having done anything wrong, he was arrested" (*Trial* 3); "One morning, when Gregor Samsa woke from troubled dreams, he found himself transformed in his bed into a horrible vermin" (*Metamorphosis* n. pag.).[51] Both events, Josef K.'s arrest and Gregor Samsa's metamorphosis, take place on a morning, and the action in both of these texts starts with the male protagonist waking up in his bed. Both of these first sentences report the result of a process that is already completed: while Gregor finds out that he has gone though a physiological transformation or metamorphosis, Josef K. learns that he is arrested and thus has been redefined as a suspect by a legal procedure. Both figures slumbered away 'their' "process," meaning their transition into a different state of being before the narration sets in, and awaken to find themselves confronted with the results.

Moreover, both texts introduce their male protagonists involved in an exchange of looks with female counterparts. After his awakening, Gregor Samsa throws an eye on a picture of a woman in furs, which he had cut out of an illustrated magazine and placed in a gilded frame, and which is described as follows: "It showed a lady fitted out with a fur hat and fur who sat upright, raising a heavy fur muff that covered the whole of her lower arm towards the viewer." Immediately after looking at the picture, he hears raindrops "hitting the pane" (n. pag.). While the narrator's "pan shot" from the woman's framed picture to the window panel suggests the likeness of these two framed impressions, Josef K. sees a woman while looking out of his window, whereby she appears to be just as framed as Samsa's lady from a magazine. Framing devices here foreground questions of spectatorship while interrelating these to gendered positions of looking and "being-looked-at-ness." Strictly speaking, the women's looks that are imposed on Josef K. and Gegor Samsa are present before the narrated events begin, placing these looks in a pre-positional moment that stresses a "before" of the events I will reconsider below during my discussion of the parable "Before the Law."

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[51] "Als Gregor Samsa eines Morgens aus unruhigen Träumen erwachte, fand er sich in seinem Bett zu einem ungeheueren Ungeziefer verwandelt" (*Verwandlung* n. pag.).

Unlike the woman in furs that Samsa has "untergebracht," both 'placed' and 'stored' in the golden frame, Josef K.'s female neighbor does not stay inside the frame into which she was placed. Rather, she moves around between various windows in order to follow K.'s arrest. Her unwelcome looks undermine K.'s agency just as much as the strangers in his apartment. The woman's mobility contrasts with K.'s being trapped, which is apparent in his fruitless gestures (*Trial* 5)—an image that runs counter to the mobility of traditional male-subject-heroes who control narrative through their movement.

The arrest also introduces K.'s "love interest." K. meets the inspector in the bedroom of his neighbor Fräulein Bürstner. The narrator reveals K.'s interest in her by stating that he knows exactly when Fräulein Bürstner moved in, what she does, and how she leads her life, although he has not really talked to her so far (*Trial* 12), meaning that he has been observing her with great interest. The supervisor has turned Fräulein Bürstner's nightstand into the negotiation table, associating the woman's bed with the events of the arrest. The bed is even redundantly mentioned throughout the scene as the place from which the nightstand was taken. K.'s discomfort also derives from the presence of three young men who look at Fräulein Bürstner's pictures, obviously interested in her outward appearance, and bring her belongings into disarray. As young men, they can be regarded as rivals who share K.'s erotic interest in Fräulein Bürstner.

The narrator creates a succession of visual impressions that take the form of a tracking shot. After capturing the rivals, the narrator conveys K.'s point of view, moving from the pictures to Fräulein Bürstner's white blouse that is hanging on the latch of the open window, before moving past the blouse and through the window. The blouse creates an immaterial stand-in for Fräulein Bürstner's body during the interrogation, which therefore appears to take place in the name of K.'s interest in her. This impression in reinforced when the narrator's gaze moves through the window and "zooms" in on the aforementioned family icons: the neighbors who are watching the arrest appear in the form of a couple ‚lying' ("liegen," *Process*) in the window, whereas the younger spectator is standing upright and with an open shirt behind them. Kafka's "visual method" (Beicken, "Visual Method" 165) here effects an erotic undertone of the arrest while inscribing readers as spectators into the text.

K. will later reenact his arrest when speaking to Fräulein Bürstner, unconsciously revealing his sexual excitement through his suggestive language. Translations of *The*

Trial tend to de-emphasize these connotations involuntarily. When K. observes Fräulein Bürstner who is returning to her room, the narrator states that K. assumes nobody would be allowed to penetrate her room that late at night: the German verb "eindringen" refers to both the intrusion of a room and to the act of sexual penetration. K.'s wish to enter Fräulein Bürstner's room thereby is associated with a sexual/erotic interest of his. Furthermore, K.'s vocabulary is suggestive when he excuses the disarrangement of Fräulein Bürstner's photos, explaining: "It was not me who took liberties with your photographs" (28). The German wording creates a more sexual and even sexually violent connotation: the reflexive "sich vergehen" refers to transgressing a rule in general, but is more often used to refer to sexual abuse in the sense of "having one's way with someone." Due to his choice of language, K. reveals the sexual desire expressed in his actions and those of his male rivals, as well as the significance of the photographs as substitute for Fräulein Bürstner's body. During their conversation, Fräulein Bürstner also addresses the strange appeal of the court, hence, an irrational and possibly erotic nature of court that forms the enigmatic center of the events.[52]

The third-person narration here creates important dissonances between the events and K.'s idealized self-perception. During their encounter, K. pretends to take care of Fräulein Bürstner until she has calmed down, denying that he himself is the reason for her discomposure. More importantly, he denies that the reason for his visit is his erotic interest in and violent behavior against Fräulein Bürstner, which, at the latest becomes clear when he starts kissing and licking her face although she wants him to leave:

> He reached out for her wrist again, she allowed it now and led him to the door. . . . she pointed at the captain's door, beneath which a strip of light emerged—"his light is on and he's amusing himself over us." "I'm coming," said K., rushed out, seized her, kissed her on the mouth, then all over her face, like a thirsty animal

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[52] Kafka and translation is a field of its own. As for erotic allusions, Leigh Hafrey includes in her article on translations of *The Trial* a case of hard-to-translate sexual connotation: towards the end, a sexual reference is involved in the word play of "Scheide-Entscheidung-Scham" as K. is executed (47). Finally, Hafrey calls the "paradox of translation" the problem that "it can only talk around the original," whereas only criticism can supply the "same effects" of this "original" (ibid.). Breon Mitchell, translator of the most recent English edition published by Schocken Books, discusses his attempts to translate *The Trial*'s first sentence and the protagonist's perspective that it conveys: "The translator's trial begins with the first sentence, in part because the hint of uncertainty is grammatically present" in the German subjunctive, so that the translation decides the degree to which the narrator's voice is infused by K.'s view (xviii). Irmgard Hobson's earlier deficiency-oriented account of Kafka translations from 1977 gives examples for the impact that translation can have on interpretation. For instance, K.'s uncle tells him that if he lost his case, he will be eliminated. The German adjective "gestrichen" suggests, as Hobson points out, that K. would be "crossed out," e.g. from a list, whereas the translation states that he would be "absolutely ruined"—an expression with economic connotations (519-520). Given the rearticulation of "original" and "copy" in many areas of 20th and 21st century thought —including the field of adaptation studies—, we might as well let go of expectations of "fidelity" and reconsider translation as an adaptation in its own right. In the context of my analysis, the connotation missing from the translation points to K. as a "Schrift-Wesen," a creature existing solely in writing, whose "death" is the moment of getting "crossed out" from the text. In *The Trial* as an adaptation of the German text into the English language, it seems, K. is less of a "Schrift-Wesen" than in *Der Process.*

> lapping greedily at a spring it has found at last. Then he kissed her on the neck, right at her throat, and left his lips there for a long time. (33)[53]

While his assault gets more direct, K.'s pretends to be rational and confident. As he finds himself alone again, he evaluates his own behavior: "Shortly thereafter K. lay in his bed. He fell asleep very quickly; before falling asleep he reflected briefly on his conduct: he was pleased with it, but was surprised that he didn't feel even more pleased; he was seriously concerned on Fräulein Bürstner's behalf because of the captain" (33). Bearing in mind the previous events, it becomes clear that he is alarmed by the captain as a rival, but conceals his true concerns by drawing on tropes of chivalry to play the virtuous and confident man. His attempt to have sex with Fräulein Bürstner failed. Rather, he licked her face "like a thirsty animal" (33), resembling an excited dog rather than a human kissing another (Boa 199). Moreover, K. manages to kiss her neither because of any interest she has in him, nor because of any strength he has. Rather, he is able to kiss her only because she gets too tired to stop him, as the narrator repeatedly stresses. K.'s helplessness with love interests, in addition to his dependence on motherly figures, is in stark contrast to his view of himself. K., however, maintains his strategies of self-deception while repeating his failure to possess a woman, that is, having sexual relations with her while outplaying all rivals.

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[53] "Er fasste wieder nach ihrem Handgelenk. . . . Sie zeigte auf die Tür des Hauptmanns, unter der ein Lichtschein hervorkam. — 'Er hat angezündet und unterhält sich über uns.' 'Ich komme schon,' sagte K., lief vor, fasste sie, küsste sie auf den Mund und dann über das ganze Gesicht, wie ein durstiges Tier mit der Zunge über das endlich gefundene Quellwasser hinjagt. Schließlich küsste er sie auf den Hals, wo die Gurgel ist, und dort ließ er die Lippen lange liegen" (*Process* 39).

The negotiation of gender and narrative manifests itself throughout *The Trial*. As the events unfold, these sexual allusions continue, granting an erotic dimension to the trial as a whole. When K. opens the legal books in the court, he discovers that they do not contain any rules or laws, but rather pornographic images. The court is also where K. encounters his next love interest, the court usher's wife, who soon reveals her promiscuous nature that disappoints K.'s ideas of his own exclusivity. Throughout the text, the events surrounding K.'s prosecution are constantly associated with his erotic aspirations. K.'s interactions with female figures take the form of a pattern that recurs through the whole text. During the trial or 'process'[54] that unfolds from Josef K.'s arrest to his execution, he encounters and desires female figures, and continues to find himself in situations that bear erotic connotations, drawing a connection between the court and sexuality.

Several studies have been published on the topic of gender and sexuality in *The Trial* that show the events to be meaningfully gendered rather than representative of a unisex *conditio humana* (Kremer 1989, Hahn 1992, Maché 1993, Boa 1996), .While some scholars are inclined to read such relations as only one level of meaning among many others, Detlef Kremer's book-length essay *Kafka: Die Erotik des Schreibens* (1989) foregrounds the centrality of the topics of gender and sexuality by framing *The Trial* as an "erotisches Zwangsuniversum," a pansexual cosmos of erotic compulsion that one can only escape via death (106, 110): according to Kremer, Josef K. and Kafka's other "K.-

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[54] The German title is *Der Process*, which means both "trial" and "process." Detlef Kremer suggests that this could refer to any kind of process ranging from a process of understanding to life in general, lastly describing a form of writing that remains open to a wide range of attributions (84, 89).

Männchen" (little K.-men) is tied to the trial/process by a compulsive mechanism that has him look for erotic encounters (106), suggesting that Josef K. objects women to a fetishizing gaze that is interested in the creaturely features of these women (107).

The women introduced at the beginning of *The Trial* are motherly figures.The protagonist is shown to be dependent on them. Josef K. does not have a house or apartment of his own, but lives with Frau Grubach. She owns his bedroom and hosts him in her house. This and other characteristics specify her as a motherly figure (Boa 190-191, Catani 268-269). For instance, when Josef K. meets her after his arrest, Frau Grubach is knitting and darning socks, performing traditionally female actions connoting care, which are typically carried out in the private sphere of the household. The mother-like role that she plays in K.'s life is depicted in both her sympathy for Josef K. and the "touch of gratitude" (22) he has for her attention. The female cook ("Köchin," 9) fulfills a motherly function by feeding Josef K.: she does not only cook for Josef K., but serves him breakfast in bed every morning, which adds an infantile connotation to his dependence. The introduction of these motherly figures early in the course of events characterizes the text's protagonist not just as a bachelor, but even as a kind of "mama's boy," who not only lives without any female companion, but also in a childlike situation. Thus motherly figures undermine K.'s idea of himself as independent and competent. For Elizabeth Boa, the aged neighbor is another motherly figure whose gaze infantilizes K., while the topic of sexuality is not introduced until the appearance of Fräulein Bürstner (192). However, the previous analysis of the scene suggests erotic allusions: the bed hints at the fact that one or more of the exchanged looks between K. and the neighbors could be motivated by desire, revealing a conflicted sexual dimension from the very beginning.

The encounter with Fräulein Bürstner is a key moment that is reiterated throughout the events. As Britta Maché suggested, the encounter of K. and Fräulein Bürstner is referenced during K.'s interactions with other women. These later encounters take the form of restagings of his conversation with Fräulein Bürstner, while the restaged constellation consists of K., a desired woman, and a rival (Maché 20). His encounters with the court usher's wife and with Leni reiterate the sexual theme while replaying this basic structural configuration. Whereas the captain, Fräulein Bürstner's neighbor, disturbs their late-night conversation by knocking on the wall shortly before K.'s kissing and licking, the student in the courthouse restages not only the captain's but also K.'s transgression by kissing the court usher's wife forcefully and loudly on the throat, thereby mocking K.'s advances (Maché 24).

Leni, however, will finally reiterate the assault in a manner that shifts K.'s position. She first appears in the role of the nurse and caretaker, before she jumps Josef K. in an unruly manner, kissing and biting his throat, whereby K. takes the role that Fräulein Bürstner played in the first scene. Leni's creaturely sexuality confirms Peter-André Alt's suggestion that women appear in *The Trial* primarily as erotically charged and typologically linked figures in that they either provide motherly care or display a creaturely sexuality on the other (397). This also counts for the court usher's wife, who makes her first appearance as a washerwoman and homemaker, but later turns out to have many sexual partners. Bearing in mind the pattern of repetition identified by Maché, these female figures, though bearing stereotypical traits, to not stabilize but rather undermine the binary gender concepts K. is trying to perform. While the ‘process’ that K. is undergoing is a legal trial on the surface, it foregrounds repetitions and variations of Josef K.’s failure to monopolize women. Thus, by undermining K.’s attempts to perform stereotypical masculinity in terms of dominance, the ‘process’ is not just a legal one, but also the process of deconstructing K.

Beyond the level of events, K.’s performance of masculinity is also undermined by the system of names in the text. Barbara Hahn has pointed out that the text refers to male and female figures in different manners. According to Hahn (160-161), a lot of male figures are named after their function, such as the ‘Wärter’ (guard), the ‘Advokat’ (advocat) and the ‘Gerichtsdiener’ (court usher); alternative ways of addressing male figures consist of only one word, namely the family name, such as Huld, Block, Kaminer, or Kullich, while the figures are never referred to as ‘Herr Kaminer,’ etc. Hahn does not pay attention to the fact that some male figures, especially in the first chapter, are called by their first name. Yet it can be stated that these instances always involve expressions of doubt: Franz for example is referred to as “the one called Franz” (*Trial* 5), suggesting that Franz might not be his actual name. These references are thereby marked as unreliable and less valid than the other ways of addressing male figures. As Hahn shows, female figures are named in another way: they are referred to by their first names, such as Leni, Anna etc., or by their family name coupled with ‘Frau’ or ‘Fräulein,’ like Frau Grubach and Fräulein Bürstner (Hahn 160-161). Hahn draws the conclusion that the categories of ‘man’ and ‘woman’ result from of acts of naming, while

Josef K. does not fit into this order of naming, but rather is named in a completely different way. Like the female figures he has a first name, but due to the additional K., the protagonist also has a part of a family name used for addressing male figures. Hahn finds that due to his name, Josef K. is situated in an in-between space of the order of naming and thereby of gender binaries (161).

Gender then appears as an effect of a name game that highlights gender's discursive constitution while contributing to Josef K.'s unstable gender identity. Naming appears as a discursive practice that constitutes gender identity—in and beyond *The Trial*. K., as bearer of an unfinished name, is framed as a misfit, inhabiting an in-between space of binary gender concepts that runs counter to his actions aimed at performing a stereotypical heterosexual masculinity. A fissure runs between the series of rivals and the typological cast of women—mothers, new women, nurses, and young wild things—on the one hand and K. on the other. While K. tries to perform stereotypical masculinity, the narrator has readers gaze at this fissure with the curiosity of the old female neighbor. Consequently, Josef K.'s name becomes a burden, as he states in the cathedral chapter of *The Trial*, meaning that his suspended in-between state, marked by this name, has become a burden as well. Elizabeth Boa has considered Josef K.'s struggle to be a self-ironic expression of a masculinity in crisis due to the decay of patriarchal orders in Kafka's time (149-150)—a view still at work in Marcella Livi's dissertation from 2012, which also places K.'s "gender trouble" within a historic context of general feeling of instability in modernity. However, I suggest that *The Trial*'s rearticulation of gender is not limited to marking a specific cultural moment in which gender identities changed; rather, the textual practices in *The Trial* highlight gender as an effect of discursive representation.

K.'s name also forms part of Kafka's practices of autonomasia of his own name across various texts. Usually, proper names have the function of specifying a subject's identity, and are therefore closely linked to the constitution of the latter's subjectivity (Hamacher 296). However, Werner Hamacher points out that in his essay "The Gesture in the Name: On Benjamin and Kafka" that Josef K. is one of many examples for the ways in which Franz Kafka inscribes references to his own name into his texts. Moreover, Hamacher contends that in Kafka's names, language no longer works solely as a means of classification, but rather as a means of dissociation (ibid. 303). Bearing this resistance against symbolic orders in mind, the name of Josef K. (who often appears as K.) not only blurs symbolic orders that produce gender identities, but also suspends him in an in-between state regarding the inside and outside of representation. Since K.'s name on the one hand allusively refers to Kafka's name, and on the other hand singles him out from the other figures, it suspends the protagonist between the sphere of the author's reality and the narration's diegesis. The figure of K. thereby both addresses and blurs the distinction between diegetic and non-diegetic spaces.

These name games are some of the ways in which the suspension of Josef K.'s gender identity form a part of the complex politics of identity at work in Kafka's oeuvre. Kafka's writings are populated by a wide variety of subjects that blur the boundaries of familiar categories of difference, taking the shape of heterogeneous configurations. Animals with a human capacity for writing and thought deliver short stories such as

"Investigations of a Dog," "A Report to an Academy," or "Josephine the Singer, or the Mouse Folk." Physical re-configurations include the hybrid body of Bucephalus, the horse-man and "New Advocate," the kitten-lamb in "The Crossbreed," the metamorphous body of Gregor Samsa, or the creature Odradek, whose body rests at the center of the "Worries of a Family Man," resisting any definition and containment within the identity categories with which we are familiar.

Kafka's politics of identity bear ethical consequences. Katja Garloff suggests that these strategies relate to Kafka's resistance to racial ideologies:

> By amplifying rather than interiorizing surfaces, he renders them *unusable* for racial ideologies. Nothing illustrates the effects of this procedure better than the image of the ape that attempts to become human, another instance of literalization. On the one hand, this image amplifies an alleged difference between "races" (Germans and Jews) into one between species (humans and apes). On the other hand, the image literalizes an ossified metaphor, namely the anti-Semitic charge that Jews can only "ape" but not truly become Germans. (100-101)

This ethical dimension of Kafka's hybrids as "literalized metaphors" is their resistance against ideological inscriptions. Beyond racial ideologies, Kafka's politics of identity also bear consequences for gender stereotypes as one possible inscription of essence onto bodies as signs, whereas the suspension of familiar identity categories blocks such inscriptions.

Moreover, these politics of identity conflict with the family as a (traditionally) heterosexual and patriarchal framework for identity. Walter Benjamin stresses that figures such as Gregor Samsa, who awakes in his parental home, Odradek, who worries the father/family man, and the kitten-lamb crossbreed that is inherited from the father, are all related to the family and father figures, whereby they "still live under the spell of the family" ("Kafka," 116). Bearing in mind the reproachful character Beicken attributed to the gaze of the "family icon" at the beginning of *The Trial*, such figures are "guilty" of resisting heterosexual reproductive logic.

Read against the backdrop of theorizations of both the cyborg and the assemblage (see ch. 1), these heterogeneous configurations differ regarding the degree to which they resist discursive concepts of identity. Just as Haraway's cyborg is a configuration of human and technology that effectively leaves these dichotomous discursive categories intact (see ch. 1), the "kitten-lamb" and "human animals" refer to known concepts that make the components of its identity. Odradek, however, differs from cyborg-like hybrids: it resists any identity-related categories not only due to its name, but also as a result of the heterogeneous configuration of its body. Inhabiting primarily attics, stairways, corridors, and halls, Odradek prefers spaces similar to the court's locations in *The Trial* (Benjamin 431) that show Odradek's affinity towards spaces of transitory character. Body, name, and whereabouts thus convey the sense of Odradek's "fluidity" with respect to categories of space, corporeality, and subjectivity. Odradek highlights its own constitution as assemblage: Odradek is agile and impossible to catch; it is made of an uncategorizable name and body (that do not lend themselves to any inscriptions of sex, gender, ethnicity, social status, age, or species), changing spatial locations (whose transitory places stress its mobility and heterogeneity), and defined through its interactions with the sorrowful father, who cannot contain this fluid being within his family regime and language. Odradek thus is not as subjugated to the "spell of the family" as Kafka's hybrids. It will outlive (or rather out-"live") the worried family man. Odradek's untimed being disturbs the family man with a “queer time” (see ch. 2), which cannot be contained within the terms of the heterosexual reproductive cycle in which the status and identity of the father is grounded. The distress of the family man is the queer that shows the father’s discursive coordinates to be limited.

Odradek’s untimed lifespan contrasts with the fate of Gregor Samsa. Although Gregor cannot take part in the communication between the family members, he is the object of the exchange between sister, father, and mother, each standing at a different closed door of his bedroom, while the four walls are correlated with the quarter-hour divisions of Gregor’s clock (Levine 1043). Gregor is trapped in the spatio-temporal “spell of the family” that will finally require him to disappear. Margaret Breen suggests that *The Metamorphosis* can be read as a story about the “‘regulatory fiction’ of gender normativity”; when Gregor dies apart from the family, he “in effect solidifies their understanding of themselves as family” (Breen 154). As Gregor ceases being (perceived as) a son, the family becomes a triad in which his sister Grete replaces him as a healthy and functional alter ego (Hochreiter 38-39). I would add that in addition to the characters’ interactions, the mentioned spatio-temporal relations set up at the beginning of the text show narrative space and time to express the demands of the family, confining the metamorphous Gregor to a precarious position within (this) regulatory fiction that culminates in his destruction.

Where is Josef K. in this spectrum of Kafka’s configurations? Is he like Odradek, an amorphous entity that thrives on a fluid state and location? Or is K. more like Gregor Samsa, trapped in the demands of family men’s narrative space and time? My analysis of

K.'s attempts to perform stereotypical masculinity, i.e., to control the narrative with his gaze, actions, and ambitions to understand the trial/process,[55] frame his state as one of being trapped rather than liberated by being a symbolic misfit.[56] Kafka's politics of identity can be considered to contribute to a general "sense of a middle" in Kafka's writings beyond the suspension of dichotomous gender categories.[57] In his article "'A Place So Insanely Enchanting': Kafka and the Poetics of Suspension," Michael Levine coined the notion of Kafka's "poetics of suspension." Building on Walter Benjamin's dictum that Kafka's fiction arises from a gesture that cannot be fully understood ("Kafka," 427), Levine focuses on gestures associated with forms of suspension in Kafka's work (Levine 1041). According to Levine, a "desire for suspension" in Kafka's writing is expressed most clearly in the story "First Distress" (1039), in which a trapeze artist—who is part of a traveling show and only leaves his trapeze for the trips in between performances—experiences a growing tension and desire for more radical forms to perform his suspension. Levine suggests that the artist's tearful outburst cheek-to-cheek with his manager, which has "discrete bodies lose their contours . . . in a wash of overflowing tears," so that his desire for artistic freedom no longer belongs to anyone but is itself liberated from possession (1040). "First Distress" shows how "physical bodies, discrete identities, and stable discursive positions tend to dissolve" (1040) while figures interact. Under the heading of Kafka's "poetics of suspension," Levine discusses various moments of spatial and corporeal "separateness . . . to be overcome" (1042). I build on the notion of suspension in order to highlight spatial and identity-related in-between states that problematize dichotomous categories of space and identity.

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[55] In addition, his attempts to dominate women form part of his performances of masculinity.

[56] In addition, the similarities between the exchanges of the looks at beginnings of *The Trial* and *The Metamorphosis* respectively suggest that K. shares Gregor Samsa's conflicted relationship with desire and gender.

[57] The announcement of a conference entitled "Middle Passages: Poetics and Ethics of Suspension" came to the striking wording of a sense of a middle, although it did not focus on Kafka, but addressed moments of suspension in literature in general.

Of particular importance to the *The Trial*'s examination of gender binaries in narrative is the nexus of gender and space created throughout the text. The most extensive discussion of the ways in which the text relates Josef K.'s interactions with women to spatial arrangements was published by Susanne Hochreiter in her book publication *Franz Kafka: Raum und Geschlecht* (2007). Hochreiter's analysis of the nexus of gender and space moves beyond any understandings of the relation between gender and space that assigns "man" and "woman" to specific spaces and spheres, e.g, to public versus domestic spaces. Rather, she is interested in processes of signification in which gender and space mutually constitute each other (91). Hochreiter contextualizes gender and space within what she describes as Kafka's deconstructionist writing that requires pluralistic readings: in Kafka's writing, spatial and gender boundaries and oppositions are suspended in equal measure, exhibiting ambiguities in the construction of subjects, identities, and spaces (107-108). These ambiguities run counter to any binary gender system (110).

Hochreiter describes the notion of "designification" to account for the ways in which Kafka's texts suggest the impossibility of stable meanings, relations, and references (110, 114-115). Calling *The Trial* a process of anti-representation, Hochreiter defines “designification” as a practice that undermines relations of representation in order to highlight the precarious conditions of signification (115).[58] For instance, Hochreiter suggests that the meaning of “court” and “cathedral” are removed from specific spatial settings, stripping these topoi from any clear-cut meaning (120). “Designification” regarding gender and space interact according to Hochreiter. For instance, she suggests that during the “Initial Inquiry” (chapter 3 of *The Trial*), designification of space and gender work together: the “woman” in the court first appears doing laundry in an almost empty room; she later is referred to as a “the washerwoman” (“Waschfrau”) when she disturbs the assembly in the court room; and finally, she is called a “married woman” after she has returned to a fully furnished living room (126).

Though I do not wish to further pursue Hochreiter’s suggestions to identify what she calls “designification” in the events of *The Trial*, her observations regarding an interrelated suspension of binary organizations of gender and space are highly suggestive. I suggest that this nexus of gender and space primarily refers to the discursive constitution of gender in narrative fiction, and, bearing in mind de Lauretis’s theorizations (see ch. 1), to “woman” as plot-space and “man” as mover in particular. Moreover, I suggest reframing this nexus and the observed shifting meanings in terms of assemblage (see ch. 1): “woman-as-space” is shown to be a fluid, volatile assemblage; “she” is configured and reconfigured in interaction with locations and “man,” undermining the “invisible style” that conceals the assemblage character of identities in “realist” narrative fiction.

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[58] Hauser’s notion is indebted to Jacques Derrida’s concepts of dissemination, a radical critique of the idea of any stable signifier.

The productivity of my approaching of “woman-as-space” as an assemblage becomes clear when focusing on the linkage between women and doors in *The Trial*. Various encounters highlight this linkage. As Barbara Hahn has pointed out, women and doors very often appear coupled throughout the text (164-165). K. meets all of the women whom he desires at doors. When waiting for Fräulein Bürstner, K. flees behind his door as he hears someone arrive, only to whisper through the crack in his door upon seeing her (*Trial* 27). K. also meets the court usher’s wife at a door, where she has to show him the way, effectively functioning as the “doorkeeper” of the court. When Josef K.’s speech in the court is interrupted by a screeching caused by the woman’s actions,[59] he runs for a door and laughs at it, because he at first is unable to pass (*Trial* 53)—a moment that according to Susanne Hause involves gender ambivalence insofar as it remains unclear whether the male student or the woman is screaming (75). Hahn stresses that Leni almost *is* a door when she appears for the first time in front of K. and his uncle (Hahn 159):

> At the peephole in the door appeared two eyes, staring at the two visitors for a moment, then disappeared; the door, however, did not open. K. and his uncle mutually confirmed the fact that they had seen two eyes. “A maid who is afraid of strangers,” his uncle said, and knocked again. Once more the eyes appeared . . . . “Open up,” his uncle called out, and pounded his fist against the door, “we’re friends of Herr Huld.” . . . The door had indeed opened, and a young girl—K.

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[59] It remains unclear whether she or the male student screams.

> recognized the dark, slightly protruding eyes—was standing in a long white apron in the entranceway, holding a candle in her hand. (*Trial* 96-97)[60]

While she is looking through the peephole in the closed door, K. can only see her eyes. These seem to animate the door; hence, the uncle is practically speaking with the door-woman configuration. Doors differ from other transitory spaces. Hahn stresses that in contrast to gates, which define an external and an internal space, doors do not establish any hierarchy among the rooms they connect. By speaking of doors instead of gates, the difference between external and internal spaces disappears (Hahn 159).

Through these door-woman configurations, the blurring of gender binaries is linked to the blurring of spatial boundaries in the text. Though Hahn's article does not clearly draw this conclusion from her observations on women and doors, the fact that women appear located at doors—or even *are* doors—makes women a marker of spaces of transition and suspension. Hence, Kafka's configurations are not limited to fusing species, but also involve configurations of figures and spaces.[61] "Woman" takes the form of an assemblage that involves her location at doors. These "women-as-doors" refer to femininity as territory in the hero's journey, or, with apologies to Mulvey and de Lauretis, woman's "to-be-crossed-through-ness" in narrative tradition (see ch. 1). However, these doors are no gates, meaning the “women-as-doors” in *The Trial* do not organize any movement of penetration from exterior to interior and towards closure; accordingly, K.’s attempts to instrumentalize women in favor of his ambition to control the trial/process remain unsuccessful. Thus, doors and female figures—or female figures as doors—contribute to the ambivalent in-between state of Josef K, in which the suspension of categories of gender identity and of spatial orientation is interrelated.

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[60] "Im Guckfenster der Tür erschienen zwei große schwarze Augen, sahen ein Weilchen die zwei Gäste an und verschwanden; die Tür öffnete sich aber nicht. Der Onkel und K. bestätigten einander gegenseitig die Tatsache, die zwei Augen gesehen zu haben. 'Ein neues Stubenmädchen, das sich vor Fremden fürchtet,' sagte der Onkel und klopfte nochmals. . . . 'Öffnen Sie,' rief der Onkel und hieb mit der Faust gegen die Tür, 'es sind Freunde des Herrn Advokaten.' . . . Die Tür war wirklich geöffnet worden, ein junges Mädchen — K.erkannte die dunklen ein wenig hervorgewälzten Augen wieder — stand in langer weißer Schürze im Vorzimmer und hielt eine Kerze in der Hand'" (*Process* 103-104).

[61] Another example of a configuration that attributes human traits to a transitory space is the short prose text "The Bridge." It is delivered by a first-person narrator with human consciousness and language who puts himself into the position of a bridge.

While figures that are defined in terms of “male” and “female” inhabit coherent narrative spaces, these are inaccessible to K.’s amorphous character. One of the most striking instances that suggests K.’s inability to thrive in spaces associated with binary gender concepts occurs when K. tries to leave the court house. While K. has trouble finding his way out of the building, he encounters a male and a female employee of the court:

> He was at their mercy; if they let go of him, he would fall like a plank. Sharp glances shot back and forth from their small eyes; K. felt their steady tread without matching it, for he was practically carried along from step to step. He realized at last that they were speaking to him, but he couldn’t understand them; he heard only the noise that filled everything, through which a steady, high-pitched sound like a siren seemed to emerge. “Louder,” he whispered with bowed head, and was ashamed, for he knew that they had spoken loudly enough, even though he hadn’t understood. Then, finally, as if the wall had slit open before him, a draft of fresh air reached him, and he heard beside him: “First he wants to leave, then you can tell him a hundred times that this is the exit and he doesn’t move.”

> K. saw that he was standing at the outer door, which the young woman had opened. (78-79)[62]

K.'s being held by a man and a woman, each of them walking on one of his sides while carrying K., who is (literally) suspended in the middle. The three figures thereby create an image for K.'s position in between binary gender concepts. This position is characterized as one in which he is cut off from communication: he cannot hear what the man and the woman say; rather, as expressed in the imagery of a boat ride and a siren's voice (see quote), both his visual and auditory perception is subject to distortions in the form of shrill sounds and shaky rooms. The scene thus highlights how distorted spaces are linked to the suspension of gender difference. Finally, it is the young woman who opens a door, which K. only perceives in the form of an incomprehensible "split" in the unreliable space that traps him. K.'s exit is stressed by the different air qualities in- and outside the court: as soon as K. reaches the exit, he senses the air and "all his strength seemed to return to him," whereas the man and the woman are "unable to bear the comparatively fresh air from the stairway, accustomed as they were to the air of the offices of the court. They could hardly reply, and the young woman might have fallen had K. not shut the door as quickly as possible" (*Trial* 79). K. cannot thrive in the environment inhabited by “man” and “woman,” to whom K. must appear to be other-worldly as well.

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[62] "Er war ihnen ausgeliefert, ließen sie ihn los, so musste er hinfallen wie ein Brett. Aus ihren kleinen Augen gingen scharfe Blicke hin und her; ihre gleichmäßigen Schritte fühlte K. ohne sie mitzumachen, denn er wurde fast von Schritt zu Schritt getragen. Endlich merket er, dass sie zu ihm sprachen, aber er verstand sie nicht, er hörte nur den Lärm der alles erfüllte und durch den hindurch ein unveränderlicher hoher Ton wie von einer Sirene zu klingen schien. 'Lauter,' flüsterte er mit gesenktem Kopf und schämte sich, denn er wusste, dass sie laut genug gesprochen hatten.Da kam endlich, als wäre die Wand vor ihm durchgerissen ein frischer Luftzug ihm entgegen und er hörte neben sich sagen: 'Zuerst will er weg, dann aber kann man ihm hundertmal sagen, dass hier der Ausgang ist und er rührt sich nicht.' K. merkte, dass er vor der Ausgangstür stand, die das Mädchen geöffnet hatte" (*Process* 84-85).

The institutions of both court and the cathedral are of particular importance to the nexus of spatial distortions and negotiations of gender. The court annihilates spatial orders beyond the aforementioned instance: it sends its personnel into K.’s private home, holds official hearings in apartment buildings, and runs offices in attics; thereby its authority is detached from any defined space (Hochreiter 114). The cathedral, which K. visits towards the end of the text, is another institution concerned with guilt and its consequences (Hochreiter 113, 117). Moreover, the court’s annihilation of spatial boundaries echoes with the cathedral scene: during the conversation between K. and the priest, the interior of the cathedral suddenly dissolves into pitch-dark infinity, which leaves K. disoriented while looking for the exit once more. Significantly, female figures show a striking presence in both of these spheres: at the court, K. meets the court usher’s wife, experiencing a reiteration of his encounter with Fräulein Bürstner; at the cathedral, the priest refers to all women who appeared throughout the trial, criticizing K. for seeking these women’s help.

To find an image in *The Trial* in which the suspension of spatial categories, gender, and narrative tradition intersect, we have to return to Leni’s body. Beyond merging with a door, Leni’s body is the site of additional hybridizations. Her body has both human and animal traits as K. discovers a creaturely feature: Leni has a membrane of skin that spreads between her middle finger and her ring finger, which evokes the association of a webbing. Leni’s physical abnormality has led to various interpretations in scholarship. Peter-André Alt reads the membrane as a manifestation of Leni's association with the sirens (who appear in several texts by Kafka), attributing to the figure a mythological antique dimension, which, according to Alt, also became manifest in her aggressive sexual approach towards K. (400). Detlef Kremer underlines the fact that K. is attracted by Leni's unusual feature, which opened her female body towards the animalistic; according to Kremer, Leni here becomes the object of a fetishizing gaze (109-110)—a reading that, however, conflicts with the force displayed by Leni. Rather, K.'s attempt to fetishize Leni culminates in a backlash, leading her to assault him.

Bearing in mind Kafka's "sense of a middle" and "poetics of suspension," the tissue between Leni's fingers points to the paradox idea of an in-between space of transitional character. The tissue is described as a "connecting skin" (108), which underlines the fact that the membrane bridges an in-between space, drawing a connection between usually separate body parts and blurring the distinction between them. Moreover, the tissue becomes a door-like a place of transition: K.'s kiss on the connecting skin sets Leni's animal forces free, leading her to jump K. in order to kiss and bite him. Thus, the tissue is a door-like site, a switch that, once flipped, ignites an inversion: the re-staging of K.'s pursuit of a love interest, which here puts K. into Fräulein Bürstner's position.

The tissue, read as an image of narrative production, here becomes a multifaceted image for the suspension of narrative tradition. Kafka's poetics of suspension operates on the "flipside" of traditional narrative and its gendered subject positions, referring back to what it is not. Following the lead of Walter Benjamin, this "negative characterization" appears to be more fruitful than a positive one ("Some Reflections on Kafka," 143). *The Trial* refers to the traditional hero's masculinity in a manner that defines the text through what it is not, just as the "ungeheures Ungeziefer," the "un-believable un-creature" into which Gregor Samsa is transformed in the German version of the *Metamorphosis*, does. Benjamin further suggests that Kafka's work presents "a sickness of tradition": while tradition is mostly considered to deliver wisdom and truth, Benjamin notes that in Kafka, such truth has been lost; rather, he suggests, "in regard to Kafka, we can no longer speak of wisdom" (144).

One could argue that such considerations are dedicated to Kafka's interpretability in general rather than to his circumvention of traditional narrative and its (gendered) subject positions. In addition to a wide range of interpretations, Kafka's works have given rise to the question of whether they are interpretable altogether. Among the most influential contributions to the discussion on Kafka's interpretability are those of Werner Hamacher. By drawing on Walter Benjamin's reflections on Kafka, Hamacher has considered Kafka's work to deliberately block interpretation (Miller 41). Benjamin suggested that Kafka's texts are parables, which, however, "are never exhausted by what is explainable"; instead, Kafka's texts convey the sense of a fundamental "precaution against interpretation" according to Benjamin (802). In contrast to traditional parables that teach a moral lesson or doctrine, Kafka's precautious parables foreground their suspension of meaning and perform what Hamacher has called an "endless postponement" of meaning (299). By elaborating on Benjamin's notion of the "cloudy spot," Hamacher discusses the ways in which Kafka's works evade interpretation in terms of an opaque center in many of Kafka's texts: "The cloudy spot no longer presents anything, no longer mediates, and no longer instructs," but rather denies instructive narrative (299).

In *The Trial*, Kafka's suspension of doctrine and interpretability find an expression in the course of the eponymous trial. Hamacher suggests that the events in the text defer a judgment of Josef K. just as much as the text defers identification of its own meaning (298-300). From this perspective, the title of the parable in *The Trial*, "Before the Law," also refers to the position of the text as a whole: as Hamacher (following Derrida) states, the parable centers on the "before" of the law, speaking from the pre-positional structure of the structure of the law itself, defining the latter as inaccessible: "This is the law: that there is always only a 'before' of the law" (300). In his reading of Benjamin, Hamacher finally suggests that Kafka presents a tradition "falling ill" insofar as its structure is dependent upon the transmission of truths, rules, and laws, and literature, once mediating this tradition, in Kafka comes to write history as the "transmission of the untransmissable" instead of a normative continuum (300).

Gender attribution forms part of the meaning-making practices that come undone in Kafka. *The Trial*'s general concern with discursive practices involves the making of gender difference, suspending the transmission of the "truth" of gender as a knowledge produced in and through (his)story. Thus, to pit a gender-oriented reading of *The Trial* against such readings that interrogate Kafka's interpretability would mean a fallback behind the text's own understanding of gender. In other words, to state that *The Trial* was not so much about gender but rather about the suspension of reliable meaning and truth (as discussed by Hamacher) would misrecognize gender concepts' own constitution as discursive effect. Rather than a biological "essence," binary concepts of masculinity and femininity are created and reiterated through their representation—a lesson taught not only by theorists such as Judith Butler and Teresa de Lauretis, but also by Josef K.'s meandering during his attempts to master the trial by winning female attention and support. Kafka's general precaution against interpretation thereby is also played out in the disintegration of binary gender concepts.

Bearing in mind gender-oriented critiques of narrative tradition, *The Trial* negotiation of gender comes as no surprise. The text that "disavows exemplary, instructive narrative" (Hamacher 299), entailing a "radical critique of traditional storytelling" (Beicken 399), suspends gender boundaries insofar as these are shaped by narrative tradition. Lotman argued that plots are a "powerful means of making sense of life" that have caused people to break down the non-discrete flow of life's events by isolating events as plot units, to connect them to certain meanings, and to organize them into regulated chains (182-183). Building on this consideration of narrative as a means to organize experience and knowledge, de Lauretis identifies mythical mechanics in narrative tradition through which sexual difference becomes a binary that is fundamental to all other opposite distinctions (see ch. 1). In relating metadiscursive writing practices to rearticulations of gender binaries, *The Trial* responds to the "truth" conveyed through gendered subject positions in Western narrative tradition.

From this perspective, the parable of the doorkeeper, "Before the Law," which resists any attempt at unambiguous understanding (Sokel, "K.'s Court" 244), can be reconsidered. In contrast to Oedipus who overcomes the Sphinx by solving her riddle, the man in Kafka's parable will not overcome the doorkeeper. Rather, the parable's quasi-narrative form is contrasted by its eventlessness, leading Derrida to call it a "storyless story." The parable is told by the priest in the cathedral chapter, and reads in part as follows:

> Before the law stands a doorkeeper. A man from the country comes to this doorkeeper and requests admittance to the Law. But the doorkeeper says that he can't grant him admittance now. The man thinks it over and then asks if he will be allowed to enter later. "It's possible," says the doorkeeper, "but not now." Since the gate to law stands open as always, and the doorkeeper steps aside, the man bends down to look through the gate into the interior. When the doorkeeper sees this, he laughs and says: "If you're so drawn to it, go ahead and try to enter, even though I've forbidden it. But bear this in mind: I am powerful. And I am only the lowest doorkeeper. But from hall to hall, however, stand doorkeepers, each more powerful than the one before. The mere sight of the third is even more than I can bear" . . . The man, who has equipped himself well for his journey, uses everything he has, no matter how valuable, to bribe the doorkeeper. And the doorkeeper accepts everything, but as he does so, he says, "I'm taking this just so you won't think you've neglected something." (215-216)[63]

If the man were to pass through the door, what kind of narrative would he possibly produce? The doorkeeper describes an array of doors that lead to the man's destination. He thus perfectly sets up the narrative pattern of "the hero's journey," the monomyth identified by Campell as a series of tests and obstacles.[64] In Kafka's parable, however, the tradition of the hero's journey has fallen ill. The text stands out from modernist literary fiction and its blocked heroes by showing this suspension of tradition to be meaningfully gendered throughout the text, involving the parable as a key to these reflections. The man in the parable does not cross the threshold to overcome the series of trials. Rather, the man remains infinitely immobilized. The parable references the monomyth as the most dominant narrative archetype of Western tradition from a pre-positional structure: the man finds himself "before" story—his story, and history. Derrida's reading of the parable highlights the non-encounter of law and narrative. While the "storyless story" does not allow its protagonist access to the "forbidden place," story itself becomes that which is inaccessible. The parable works as a meta-text and commentary on its own capabilities (Sussman 85). The idea of a hero's journey to the law is framed as a narrative naiveté that is sidestepped by both the parable and the text as a whole.

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[63] "Vor dem Gesetz steht ein Türhüter. Zu diesem Türhüter kommt ein Mann vom Lande und bittet um Eintritt in das Gesetz. Aber der Türhüter sagt, dass er ihm jetzt den Eintritt nicht gewähren könne. Der Mann überlegt und fragt dann, ob er also später werde eintreten dürfen. 'Es ist möglich,' sagt der Türhüter, 'jetzt aber nicht.' Da das Tor zum Gesetz offensteht wie immer und der Türhüter beiseite tritt, bückt sich der Mann, um durch das Tor in das Innere zu sehn. Als der Türhüter das merkt, lacht er und sagt: 'Wenn es dich so lockt, versuche es doch trotz meines Verbotes hineinzugehn. Merke aber: Ich bin mächtig. Und ich bin nur der unterste Türhüter. Von Saal zu Saal stehn aber Türhüter einer mächtiger als der andere.Schon den Anblick des dritten kann nicht einmal ich mehr ertragen.' . . . Der Mann, der sich für seine Reise mit vielen ausgerüstet hat, verwendet alles und sei es noch so wertvoll um den Türhüter zu bestechen. Dieser nimmt zwar alles an, aber sagt dabei: 'Ich nehme es nur an, damit Du nicht glaubst, etwas versäumt zu haben'" (*Process* 226-227).

The negotiation of gender throughout *The Trial* highlights how the misguided ambition to enter story is mapped onto a male subject position. Whereas the monomyth is commonly organized around the desire of the male subject who drives the narrative movement (see ch. 1), Josef K.'s disoriented maneuvers throughout *The Trial* foreground the displacement of what Peter Brooks calls a "male plot of ambition" that orders temporal progress into a satisfying whole and towards a proper closure (see ch. 1)." In K.'s attempts to "read" the parabolic text-within-the-text, the roles of reader and hero come to coincide, highlighting the hero's function as a figure for readers' perception and understanding. Moreover, readers are made to "listen" to the parable just like K. does; the text-within-the-text effectively puts readers in the position of characters, blurring their extra-diegetic status.[65] In the words of Avital Ronell, readers are "coprotagonists," whose interpretative movement is demobilized just as the movement of the parable's protagonist who never passes through the door (185). The totalizing of the world "as possession and progress" (Brooks 39) through the hero's ambition and readers efforts to construct meaning remain suspended in and through the parable. The man before the law and story is immobilized by a mere ambition to an ambition, suspended before and outside any history that would transmit meaning.

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[64] It bears repeating that "the hero's journey" was translated into a paradigm of screenwriting and is still a normative pattern in narrative cinema.

The Trial's pre-positional structure also manifests in its overall form. Strictly speaking, the text is not a novel, but rather a collection of fragments. The text was molded into the form of a book and published posthumously, considering the fragmentary character to bear witness to an "unfinished" state of the work. However, keeping in mind the ways in which the text inscribes its own being "before" story, the genre label of the novel does not mark any targeted form; rather, "novel" inscribes an endless postponement of the novelistic form into the fragmentary corpus. The "process," then, is one involving protagonist, reader, and writer into this movement of the postponement of story. The seeming narrative integrity of the parable of the doorkeeper paradoxically highlights the amorphous, network-like texture of the fragmentary *Trial.*

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[65] Jacob Burnett described a similar effect of the ending of *The Castle,* using the notion of the strange loop, a structure that loops back on itself after the appearance and sudden disappearance of a hierarchy: "Recognizing the strange loops returns us to the position of a reader, modulated upward . . . toward greater sophistication. Our roles as reader, novel character, sophisticated reader are, of course, created by Kafka's writing—although that writing itself is contingent on the agency of a reader for its existence. . . . The strange loops preclude any final verdict" (116).

K. finds himself desiring narrative instead of inscribing his desire *in* narrative. He carries along readers with their desire to stabilize the meaning and form of the text. K. is struggling with a "process" that he cannot turn into proper story by appropriating the role of the hero. Let me now stress that this is not a shortcoming. K.'s seeming "inability" to take action against his situation effects the suspension of an archetypical male subject position anchored in narrative tradition. Readers, with a neighborly curiosity, find themselves "before" gender difference.

Kafka's intermediality allows for a reconsideration of the fragmentary form and signifying practices of *The Trial*. In addition to a cinematic visuality that I discussed at the beginning of this chapter, "digital" traits have been identified in Kafka's writing: in his most recent book, *Playful Intelligence: Digitizing Traditions* (2014), Henry Sussman suggests considering Kafka as a "programmer" of virtual environments, who is integrating "emergent technologies of communications, statistics, and record-keeping (storage) in his day, eventually coalescing in the cybernetic revolution" (100). Sussman frames Kafka's style as a "downplaying of 'realistic depiction'" in favor of meta-literary writing, which foregrounds "recursive, isomorphic, self-referential, autopoietic processes of signification" (84-85, 89). In Sussman's "digitizing" reading of *The Trial* (or *Der Process*), the parable is an instance of digital organization: as a miniaturization of the text as a whole, the parable highlights *The Trial*'s working principles on a different level, performing a "strange loop" in that it finally takes readers back in *The Trial* (89). Given the explosion of “cinematizing” readings in the contemporary media landscape, Sussman’s digital Kafka suggests the opportunity to interact with Kafka’s *The Trial* in ways that respond to these contemporary concerns as well. In other words, we may learn to read the digital from, or with, Kafka.

In this context, I suggest revisiting issues surrounding both the publication and interpretation of *The Trial*. Since its first edition, contemporary formats of publishing have emerged that would accommodate both the text’s fragmentary form and pre-positional structure. Rather than between the covers of a book, I contend that the *Trial* or “process” might best convey its suspension of storytelling and meaning in the form of hypertext fiction, a form of electronic literature. Hypertexts, with their navigable networks of textual (and visual) fragments, offer modes of readership that play to the reader implied in *The Trial*. A hypertext adaptation of *The Trial* would free readers and text from the doctrine of continuity. Readers-turned-users could navigate the network of interconnected fragments in a wide variety of ways. That way, it would become palpable how each fragment is a “door” to other fragments, while the readers’ clicks open these doors like kisses on the membrane between Leni’s fingers. By clicking through the network of fragments, readers would experience the text’s postponement of continuity through the diversity of connections that they can create between the fragments, possibly even causing reiterations by looping back to previously read snippets within the hypertext. In short, navigation as a mode of readership would foreground *The Trial*’s suspension of doctrine and the implied reader in a space “before” story and gender difference.

At the beginning of this chapter, I suggested that film adaptations can recover from Kafka's texts the "shock-value" of the early days of the cinematic medium in an effort to move beyond Hollywood's narrative grammar. Now let us imagine that instead of "returning" to early 20th century avant-garde practices, contemporary film adaptation is able to respond to both Kafka's cinematic and digital qualities in order to account for contemporary media systems. As I will argue in the following chapter, such adaptation of *The Trial* actually exists.

5 A Chick Flick for the Posthuman: The Cybercinematics of David Lynch and "Ms. K" in *Inland Empire*

Editorials have a habit of comparing David Lynch's films with Kafka's texts, referring to the films' so-called "Kafkaesque" quality. In interviews, Lynch himself has expressed a strong affinity to Kafka's works: "The one artist I feel could be my brother…is Franz Kafka" (Lynch, Rodley 56). Lynch has even spoken about unfinished plans to adapt *The Metamorphosis* into film (216). Such comments, in addition to readers' and viewers' comparisons between Kafka and Lynch, show Kafka to be a cultural force with an ongoing impact on media production and reception. However, there is still a lack of scholarly argument on what we gain from reading Lynch through Kafka, and possibly vice versa.

My discussion in this chapter deals with David Lynch's latest feature film, *Inland Empire*, from 2006. The project left film critics stranded, causing them to state that *Inland Empire* was "hermetically sealed" (Michael Atkinson n. pag.) or so "wildly challenging" it makes *Mulholland Drive* seem "downright classical" (Kristin Jones, qtd. in Mactaggart 145). I argue that the film is an adaptation in two ways. First, the digital video production adapts characteristics of digital media networks for the big screen. My readings show how in addition to using digital material for production, the film experiments with news ways to link episodes and involve screens that mime digital screens and networks. I therefore call the film "cybercinematic." Second, I read Lynch's film as an unofficial adaptation of Kafka's *The Trial*: I consider both Kafka's text and

Lynch's production to be equally invested in the relationship between gender and narrative. From this angle, I understand Lynch's production to be a re-gendered response to Kafka's text—an unofficial adaptation with a female protagonist, a "Ms. K.," in the digital age. By adapting both literary and digital "sources," the film reflects on its own cinematic medium while rearticulating gender binaries anchored in Hollywood.

My reading is methodologically not only indebted to recent discussions in adaptation studies that have begun rearticulating the relationship between so-called "source" and "copy," reframing adaptation as an ongoing dialogical process between the texts involved. Rather, I also draw on the cognate notion of "cross-mapping," which was coined by Elisabeth Bronfen. Cross-mapping refers to an interpretive mode that draws analogies between works although these do not clearly refer to each other, but rather show an ongoing cultural impact of influential texts. I broaden the notion of cross-mapping beyond the influence of texts, cross-mapping Lynch's film and digital networks in order to identify new media practices' impact on the film.

Although the digitization of film has taken over cinema, the medium remains curiously conservative. Digital production and post-production technologies by now are a standard in the entertainment industry, even generating totally digital worlds in optional 3D. Although certainly impacting visual culture, most digital mainstream productions finally keep up the old cultural technique of storytelling: they bring people to come together to follow a hero on his journey, adapting an ancient monomyth by means of contemporary technologies.

However, a different digital revolution in cinema meanwhile quietly started rebuilding what we experience when we “go to the movies.” David Lynch has digitized his cinema not only by shifting to different production technologies, but also by transgressing narrative storytelling and cinematic space. His short film series called *Rabbits* that he published online finally bled into his latest feature *Inland Empire*, which was shot on digital video and abandons traditional linear narrative altogether. Rather, as various reviews have suggested, the events proceed with the associative interconnectedness of hyperlinks (Lim n. pag., Mactaggert 153), creating a structure where, in the words of Samardzija, scenes “link to each other without linear causality, [and] words and images consistently refer to each other with establishing any coherent sense of temporal order” (n. pag.). Although the digital metaphor has begun spreading in scholarship on *Inland Empire*, there is still a lack of understanding of the ways in which Lynch’s concern with media innovation, his parodies of Hollywood, and his occupation with female actresses and characters relate to each other.

The experimental character of the film was made possible by the conditions under which the production took place. Lynch developed his project almost without any funding, and finally distributed it on his own without any support of distribution companies. Moreover, Lynch shot the material on commercial-grade digital video, which substituted much more expensive film reels and equipment while providing a new convenience with regard to post-production processes. Esthetic decisions and economic necessities were mutually determining. With *Inland Empire,* Lynch thus departs from both Hollywood as system of production and Hollywood’s conventions of cinematic representation. The digital material finally provided the indispensable foundation of both the aesthetics of *Inland Empire* and the performance style of its protagonist. The inexpensiveness of the video tape bids farewell to the director's call for the "cut" on the set, which usually interrupts the actors' performances. Instead, Lynch was able to shoot a large quantity of material—a circumstance to which one could attribute both the final film's length of three hours and the intense performance style of Dern (Seeßlen 243, 245). Hollywood and the cost-saving infrastructure of Poland were not only the actual locations of the shoots, but they also became inscribed in the film in the form of diegetic locations that constitute some of the manifold parallel worlds in *Inland Empire*. Lynch's programmatic statement correlates with his economic situation, since he declared in the context of the project's production: "I am through with film as a medium. For me, film is dead" (Seeßlen 149).

As I seek to show, it is due to its contemplation of media innovation that *Inland Empire* left audiences and many critics stranded. I read *Inland Empire* as an example of how the new setting of a multimedia network can be a source of adaptation: translated into cinema and onto the big screen, the network replaces narrative and its subjectivities in cinema. Instead of a linear sequence of events interconnected through the logic of cause and consequence, the loosely connected episode take the form of a net-like structure involving instances of recursion. In order to frame this structure, I draw on Douglas Hofstadter's theory of recursion; furthermore, I refer to the discussion of the posthuman in order to examine the consequences that this texture has for the performance of subjectivity, and for gendered subjectivity in particular.

Whereas Lynch's previous films were notorious for oscillating between narrative sequences and leaps between narrative levels, *Inland Empire* performs a much more radical turning away from storytelling. While the film's predecessor *Mulholland Drive* structured its parallel worlds around an identifiable center axis (Seeßlen 253, Burningham 36),[66] *Inland Empire* abandons such spatial or narrative guidelines. Rather, the three-hour-realm shot on digital material experiments with the maximum accepted length for feature films, neglects temporal, spatial, and causal orders, shatters its protagonist into fragments of disparate identities, and barely contains any clearly motivated, even identifiable events. The viewer is deprived of both of the key elements of narration: neither does Lynch's latest empire have a story, nor does it have a hero. What is taking place in *Inland Empire* is not cinema anymore. Cinema is cited in this audiovisual material only as abandoned medium, while a new type of texture emerges that is out of place in a movie-theater. Due to the liminal position of this texture I would like to introduce the neologism of cybercinematics as a device to frame the reading I offer, as I suggested before (Mandt 2013).

Inland Empire begins with images that address media innovation. On the dark screen, a beam of light suddenly appears, which resembles that of old film projector, illuminating the title; the screen then shows the black-and-white close up of a gramophone needle tracing a vinyl record (Nochimson 10). The digital video experiment here stresses its negotiation of analogue technologies. These images, however, are of dark and eery character, conveying the sense that the new medium might be “haunted” by past technologies. Therefore, the “forgetfulness” discussed in a dialog that follows soon after these images may just as well apply to media technologies: the screen, though turned into a site of cybercinematic reflection, is still haunted by the continuity of seemingly overcome media technologies and their influence on the representational languages of their successors.

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[66] Due to this structure, the composition of *Mulholland Drive* has often been compared to a Möbius strip, most famously by Lynch himself. Burningham points out the fact that the narration so to speak "collapses" into the mysterious box in the middle of the film: one of the main figures turns a key in the locker of the box and then disappears only to reappear within a constellation of shifted figural identities (36). Jerslev suggests that a "fairly coherent story" emerges from *Mulholland Drive* "once the riddle of the temporal structure has been solved (4). Georg Seesslen contends that in *Inland Empire,* the strip is lacking the middle axis (253).

By means of a collage-like opening, the film highlights its concern with gender, narrative, and technology right from the beginning. We see an encounter between a man and a woman with technically obscured faces, and are able to guess from their sexual, but conflicted and in part violent interaction that they might be a prostitute and a pander or customer. The blurring of their faces creates the sense of an altered surveillance material that is not screened in “real time” (Jerslev 8), calling attention to the technologies involved in the images’ production. Other snippets that preclude the first dialog with the protagonist, such as a scene from the aforementioned *Rabbits* sitcom that mentions a secret, and a tense conversation between two foreign men, deliver expository hooks in a defamiliarized manner, playing with genre expectations (Nochimson 11). Finally, we see a crying woman watching a television screen, whereby this overture-like exposition arrives at an image that addresses spectatorship. The television screen in front of the crying woman first shows the rabbits, and then the figure of the neighbor who will soon meet the female protagonist.

The first dialog involving *Inland Empire*'s female protagonist addresses the topic gender binaries in storytelling. Lynch's protagonist is played by Laura Dern and introduced as actress Nikki Grace. She experiences an unheralded visit from a new neighbor. During their conversation, the elder woman suddenly recounts, like she says, an old tale:

> A little boy went out to play. When he opened his door he saw the world. As he passed through the doorway he caused a reflection. Evil was born. Evil was born and followed the boy…An old tale. And the variation. A little girl went out to play. Lost in the marketplace as if half born. Then—not through the marketplace, you see that, don't you? But through the alley behind the marketplace. This is the way to the palace. But it isn't something you remember. (00:13:34-00:15:10)

The neighbor's tale has often been read as the film *in nuce*: many of the events that follow echo with the tale about the boy followed by evil, and the girl getting lost in the marketplace: gender differences are addressed in *Inland Empire* in the form of prostitution and sexual violence, so that a "marketplace" is as much in play as "evil." However, the tale's very form of a story contrasts with the cosmos to come. There will be no story line, and no stable character that could be identified as the 'little girl.' Rather than providing a summary or a plot, the seeming narrative integrity of the fictive folk tale will contrast with the structure of *Inland Empire*.

However, re-reading the tale with a focus on its structure sheds new light on the figure of the gender split. The boy who goes "out to play" is born in and through narrative: events come into being through his crossing of a threshold and encounter with exteriority. By calling the story an "old tale," the neighbor references the genre of the folk tale, which is the cradle of the "monomyth" that is still being adapted across contemporary media. Strictly speaking, however, only the first part of the neighbor's tale is actually called "an old tale," whereas the part about the girl is labeled as a "variation" instead. The scene's reflection on narrative tradition in terms of a gender split echoes Ingeborg Bachmann's words in *Malina,* where the first-person narrator refers to Malina and calls herself an "unavoidable dark tale accompanying his own bright story, a tale which he, however, detaches and delimits" (8-9). Lynch's project here announces its kinship with feminist poetics in literature and cinema in terms of an annotation to established forms of representation. Lynch's dark "variation" involves fragmentation just as much as Bachmann's poetic experiment: in the neighbor's "variation," language becomes fractured, involving elliptical sentences and inconsistent time frames, foreshadowing the fractured character of the course of events to come. Thus, rather than providing a narrative model for decoding *Inland Empire* in terms of plot, the neighbor's "tale" with its split and "variation" indicate *in nuce* the programmatic turning away from narrative, performed with a female protagonist as the "other" of narrative tradition.

The performance of Laura Dern and Grace Zabriskie point to the question of understanding and interpretation. The very arrival of the neighbor causes an astonished look on Dern's face that will last throughout the whole scene. Zabriskie's performance of the neighbor, on the contrary, involves a constantly changing face that never rests long enough to create any readable expression—except for that of an interim peering. The two women, by dint of their facial expressions, play a game of ciphering and attempted deciphering, in which the neighbor spawns her pronouncements and while checking on her counterpart's reactions, whereas Nikki tensely, but only helplessly, tries to unpack what she is hearing and experiencing.

Accordingly, the first dialogue in *Inland Empire*'s also addresses the question of causality. The neighbor urges the protagonist to understand that "actions do have consequences." The figures who appear throughout the film seem to suffer from these "consequences" while the underlying actions or reasons remain unclear (Elsaesser L.A.-Trilogie 62). Bearing in mind the reflexive cinematic poetics of *Inland Empire*, the neighbor's words refer to the suspension of the cause-and-effect logic of linear narrative, while at the same time warning us to misunderstand this suspension as arbitrariness. Rather, the film suggests that seemingly unrelated events are in fact related, inviting spectators from the very beginning to make connections between various episodes that move beyond the rules of continuity. I will thus refrain from any attempt to organize the events that occur throughout *Inland Empire* in terms of plot for the purpose of summary, but rather focus on the film's undoing of conventional plot.

The encounter of the two women ends with a montage that picks up on the elliptical nature of the "variation" about the girl. After their conversation about the host's new role, the neighbor utters enigmatic pronouncements about remembrance, forgetfulness, and deranged temporal orders, and finally points to an empty sofa. Her stiff index finger appears in a detail shot, whirring over the sofa in the background. Another shot then shows Dern's face in a close up, while her gaze slowly moves away from her conversational partner and into the direction into which the neighbor is pointing. Immediately before she would come to face the spectators of *Inland Empire*, there is a cut and we see the sofa again, this time with Dern sitting on it. Here, the elliptical language of the girl's "variation" of the old tale is translated into editing strategies: by means of editing, a temporal leap is performed that abandons the "invisible style" and its construction of any coherent space and time. Rather, editing's function here is redefined as the tactical chopping of cinematic space.

In order to develop its cybercinematic quality, the film then moves from nesting to netting. A nested narrative is set up only to be pushed out of narrative and to collapse into a netlike structure. The course of events starts off with the production of a film-within-a-film, raising the expectation of a Lynchian play of leaps between narrative levels. *Blue Velvet* and *Wild at Heart* star Laura Dern is the lead of *Inland Empire.* She is introduced as actress Nikki Grace, who takes up the role of Sue Blue in a new film production, the melodrama "High on Blue Tomorrows." However, the boundaries of the film-within-a-film soon get blurred, as the protagonist begins confusing her identities. She interrupts herself in a conversation with her co-star: "Damn! This sounds like dialogue from our script!" She then is reprimanded by the director, leaving her surprised that she actually finds herself shooting a film scene. But who are we to tell her that she is wrong? Actress Laura Dern is playing a role, namely an actress playing a role, in a film adaptation of a film adaptation of a folk tale, produced as film-within-a-film, labeled *Inland Empire* and presented in a movie theater. Her performance is pointing in- and outwards this spiral set-up, destabilizing boundaries and hierarchies between narrative levels. Rather than displaying her inability to have a proper character and convey narrative, Dern's performance undoes the very category of character and promotes the collapse of the nested set-up.

The film-within-a-film addresses the very topic of adaptation. The melodrama “High on Blue Tomorrows” later turns out to be the remake of an earlier, unfinished film, which again was based on a folk tale: the filmmakers reveal to the actors that “High on Blue Tomorrows” is a remake of a Polish adaptation of a folk tale called “47,” and that the previous film production was never completed, because the actors were murdered for having an affair. *Inland Empire* here addresses commercial adaptation in terms of a transfer of narrative units. Many mainstream productions are based on novels, transferring characters, events, and milieu from a book onto the big screen. Moreover, fiction film in general is an adaptation of the written word. By referencing the oral tradition of the folk tale as an opaque source at work in film production, *Inland Empire* addresses Hollywood’s involvement with the archaic narratives: the monomyth produced in oral tradition gets reiterated through cinema’s adaptations. The gloomy background story of the tale’s earlier film version conveys the sense of a curse that seems to be tied to the tale (Elsaesser 56). The background story of “High on Blue Tomorrow” thus renders adaptations as uncanny doppelgängers and revenants doomed to perpetuate a somewhat dark and violent quality of the material they adapt. Occult practices are shown throughout the film and finally lead the wife of Dern’s co-star to fatally attack her, whereby the events suggest that Dern struggles with the curse of narrative tradition. All in all, the many instances in which *Inland Empire* shifts between the genres of melodrama and horror film add to the impression that a violent quality is at work beneath the surface of contemporary entertainment culture made in Hollywood. *Inland Empire*, however, though not necessarily overcoming its medium's cinematographic heritage, adapts the institution of mainstream fictional cinema into a kaleidoscopic texture that has spectators stare behind the glossy surface and into a dark and violent abyss.

The collapse of the previously nested levels in *Inland Empire* then turns into a reflection on the rules of representation in cinema and beyond. Three hours of digital material neglect temporal, spatial, and causal orders, and barely contain any clearly motivated events. Interiors, streets, and film sets form labyrinthine setting. Each room brings a new mood and visual texture (Dargis, n. pag.), while the figure's movements though these quasi-connected spaces (McCarthy 48) seem disoriented and aimless due to a lack of motivation in terms of conventional narrative.

Reconsidered as a project that reaches beyond cinema in the age of digitization, the cybercinematic texture of *Inland Empire* samples new ways of linking episodes. The doors Dern passes through eventually start connecting disparate rooms, creating a network of situations that differ according to her identity, performance style, language, time, and place; other scenes do not include Dern at all, such as events that seem to take place in Poland in the 1920s, and enigmatic sitcom scenes, which parenthetically appear and involve actors with large rabbit heads. Nikki's womanizing co-star Devon and her jealous Polish husband make appearances, alluding to the melodramatic cliché of the romantic triangle (Nochimson 12). Groups of women repeatedly surround the protagonist, in some scenes as a group of prostitutes, in others as dancers. Kaleidoscopic instances of violence, interspersed into the enigmatic events, create a cataclysmic atmosphere and continue to convey a sense of the significance of gender relations.

The protagonist adapts and rewrites the “hero’s journey” into a meandering through a net-like texture. Dern’s motion lack motivation, but rather appears almost merely spatial, suggesting that instead of a plot, her movement presents only one out of many possible “sampling processes” for which the networked texture allows. Doors work like hyperlinks in this cybercinematic realm, establishing connections beyond narrative continuity. Some of these doors are enigmatically marked, drawing attention to the option to transit while concealing the back end design that will determine the next move (see fig. 7).

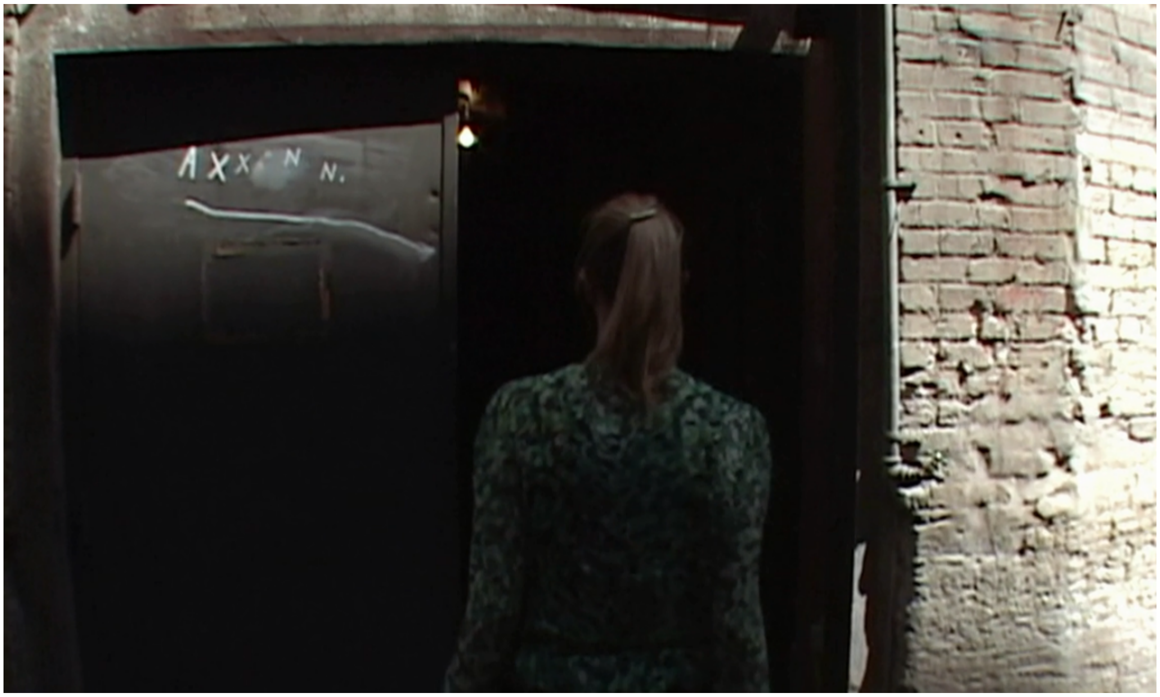

Fig. 7. *Inland Empire* adapts *The Trial*’s nexus of gender and space: while meandering through a net-like texture, the startled protagonist is drawn to a marked door. *Inland Empire.* Dir. David Lynch. Perf. Laura Dern, Justin Theroux. Concorde 2007.

Narrative turning points as driving forces are replaced in the cybercinematic realm by instances of recursion. These instances reiterate events and cause the leading actress to paradoxically face one of her many selves. The most dramatic sequence does not result from any arc of suspense, but rather from a self-encounter of the protagonist: Dern arrives in a movie theater, watching a screening of herself in a scene presented earlier in the film; the screen then shows in real time the events in the theater, including the protagonist watching the screen; this experience then is followed by a nightmarish chase. Such loop-like figurations that structure the new texture can be considered with reference to cognitive scientist Douglas Hofstadter: in his book *Gödel, Escher, Bach*, he introduces his concept of the strange loop as a level-crossing feedback loop, whose circuit performs a shift from one level of a system to another. However, despite the sense of departing, "one winds up exactly where one had started out" (Strange Loop 102). Hofstadter illustrates the strange loop with the lithography *Drawing Hands* by Maurits Cornelis Escher (see fig. 8): the picture shows a sheet of paper, on which two hands form a circle by drawing each other into existence, paradoxically crossing the levels of creator and creation, of representation and its constitutive agents.

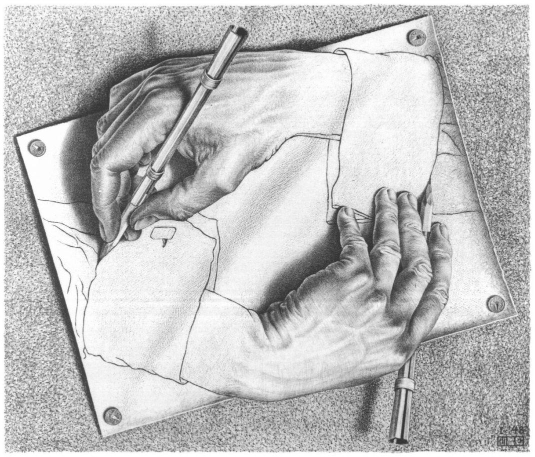

Fig. 8. Escher, M. C. *Drawing Hands*.

By means of recurrence, an Escher-like strange loop between the levels of creator and creation is performed in *Inland Empire* as a loop between actress and role. The moment in which actress Nikki plays her role, “Sue,” for the first time, later is reiterated from a different perspective. Recursion here causes role and actress to encounter each other. First, the actors meet with the filmmakers in the studio to read a dialog from the script. Nikki addresses her partner according to the script: “I am so sorry. Look into the other room.” At that moment they hear a noise coming from behind reversed scenery. Her partner runs after whoever was hiding there, mingling levels by following her scripted request to look into “the other room.” The reversed scenery provides an image of twisted self-referentiality, not only pointing to the medium of film but also defining the invisible space behind it as part of an “other,” different level of processing.

Later in the film, we see Dern walking down a street, while requisites and actions mark the situation as one she earlier referred to as a scene from the script. We could read this as performance of Sue, if it were not for the twisted structure of the rest of the scene. She finds herself at another door, on which a series of letters and signs form a cipher. Her facial expressions do not reveal any encoding of that key. What attracts her to follow the hyperlink is the mere fact that it is marked.

The entry to the space behind the door is a leap into a different spatial order. The screen of *Inland Empire* gets dark and goes silent for a couple of seconds, leaving the spectator disoriented. Spatial and temporal orders of cinema collapse, and a cybercinematic space opens up. The staging of Laura Dern’s reappearance then consequently breaks every rule of narrative space in cinema, while editing works as tactical chopping of cinematic space: after a few flashing lights she faces the camera and moves towards the spectator. Dern’s point-of-view shot then performs the strange loop to the rehearsal scene. She is slowly walking towards the filmmakers and the actors Devon and Nikki, causing the noise from the “other room.” Approaching herself from two different levels of processing, as actress and role, she reveals the strange loopiness of the texture she is sampling. In terms of Hofstadter, we wind up where we had started out, in a feedback loop that in the case of *Inland Empire* paradoxically crosses the levels of creator and creation.

Though unintended by Hofstadter, the strange loop here can count as a model for meaningful patterns in non-linear narrative. While Hofstadter does not discuss film, but rather considers the lithography to be only an illustration for level-crossing circuits in general, one can consider *Drawing Hands* as strange loop par excellence when dealing with representation: it involves representation as much as its constitutive agents, or creators.

Due to its loopy texture, *Inland Empire* allows its protagonist to switch off between the different levels of her own cinematic representation and fragmentation. Image and creator, here actress and role, approach each other from two levels, the film set and the “other room” within the reversed scenery. The location where Dern is “looping” is the film set as production site of the texture through which she is moving. The very act of representation is foregrounded through the strange loop, while a new meaningful pattern is introduced that transcends the medium that it quotes. Narrative cinema is overcome by a cybercinematic mode of performance within strange loopiness.

The loop here becomes a counter-figure and disturbance to linear narrative. Loops relate events back to (seemingly) previous ones or cause characters to paradoxically encounter themselves, transgressing narrative continuity and coherence. Moreover, the figure of the loop points to structures in digital processing that heavily depend on circuits and iterations, and thereby form part of the *Inland Empire*'s adaptation of digital qualities for the big screen. In that way, the film corresponds with recent discussions in new media theory. The latter have suggested a possible shift in the status of narrative, primarily due to narrative's relationship with databases. In 21st century's information age, the database is considered to be an increasingly important cultural form that contrast and, possibly, competes with narrative. Lev Manovich, for instance, has pointed out in his seminal book *The Language of New Media* that the database represents the world as an unordered list of items while narrative organizes items as events in terms of a cause-and-effect trajectory (225). This difference in organizing items leads Manovich to his influential metaphor of narrative and database as "natural enemies," who are "competing for the same territory of human culture" as they make meaning out of the world (ibid.).

Lynch's looping out of narrative also reorganizes gendered subject positions. Lotman suggested that narrative is a powerful means to organize knowledge and experience, while de Lauretis's analysis revealed narrative tradition to be one that made gender binary into a fundamental opposition. Bearing in mind these considerations, we understand that narrative is not only man-made, but also makes man—and woman. Loop-like configurations then not only suspend linear narrative, but also those subject position inscribed and anchored in narrative as practice of meaning-making.

A cross-mapping of *The Trial* and David Lynch's *Inland Empire* shows a wide range of similarities. Shared traits between text and film include the opacity of events, the disoriented movements of the protagonist, unreliable spaces, and the topics of sexuality and death. Moreover, the film embeds Kafkaesque parables into its non-narrative texture.

In particular, *Inland Empire* shares with *The Trial* a strong concern with space. As discussed in the previous chapter, Kafka's writings are laced with transitional spaces such as doors, gates, and bridges, contribute to Kafka's "poetics of suspension" (Levine). I argued in the previous chapter that in *The Trial*, these transitional spaces form a nexus with gender rearticulations, exposing and suspending the concomitant discursive construction of the dichotomies of male/female and exterior/interior in narrative. Adapting this nexus of gender and space, Lynch's production picks up on the significance of transitional spaces. *Inland Empire* contains a lot of long tracking shots—facilitated by the digital video camera (Jerslev 4)—that present interiors in disorienting ways while stressing transitional spaces such as doors, gates, corridors, and stairways (Elsaesser L.A.-Trilogie 68). In the film, these transitional spaces come to stress Lynch's adaptation of hyperlinked networks, responding to *The Trial* in the digital age.

Moreover, spatial boundaries are blurred in both Kafka and Lynch as rooms dissolve into infinity. In the Cathedral chapter in *The Trial*, where K. speaks with a priest about the famous parable "Before the Law," the interior of the cathedral suddenly darkens. K.'s surroundings thereby turn into a pitch-dark space deprived of any visible boundaries. *Inland Empire* repeatedly involves moments in which Dern finds herself at transitional spaces such as doors and windows (see fig. 7), and spaces suddenly dissolve into pitch-dark infinity. Like Kafka's text, the film thereby conveys the sense that its protagonist becomes detached from the spatio-temporal coordinates of narrative, wandering instead through a realm where discursive parameters come undone.

Inland Empire also involves a Kafkaesque office space, inhabited by a figure called Mr. K. The female protagonist finds Mr. K. in his office above a film theater. The dark and shabby office space can only be reached via a narrow, steep staircase. Lynch here creates a space along the lines of a standard one in Kafka: as Karl notes, in Kafka's writings, "space up is always negated by space enclosed. The former may be a room at the top of something—building, warehouse, tower—but it is, also, space denied. There is no vista, no horizon, no sense of things opening out" (425). The claustrophobic setting of the office in *Inland Empire* thus reminds us of the many high-lying spaces in *The Trial*, and the suffocating effects these have on Josef K., such as the court offices located in the attic of an apartment building, or the attic studio of the painter Tintorelli. The profession of Lynch's Mr. K., however, remains unclear; as Elsaesser suggests, he could be a private investigator, psychiatrist, or rabbi (57).

While in *The Trial*, K. enters these spaces to be schooled by court employees, artists, and priests, Mr. K.'s office in *Inland Empire* is a space enabling the female protagonist to narrate. During their interaction, Mr. K. remains mostly silent. The protagonist's monologue, which cannot be clearly attributed to any of the "nested" characters of Nikki or Sue, centers on traumatic events such as a fight against her perpetrator during an attempted rape, and the loss of a child. It is the very same monologue (and recording) that the protagonist will watch herself delivering on the screen of the movie theater shortly after leaving Mr. K.'s office: the protagonist discovers that she has turned into film while at the same time, by becoming spectator, transgressing this very constitution as film image. The monologue seemingly presents a psychopathological explanation for the fractured texture of *Inland Empire* only to be called into question through a commentary on the medium of cinema. To frame the female protagonist in terms of psychopathology would mean to re-direct her performance to the genre of melodrama; instead, however, the protagonist's self-encounter in the film theater subordinates any pathologizing impetus to her adaptation of Hollywood's horrors. In that way, Mr. K. and his Kafkaesque office are neither providing psychiatric nor legal council. Rather, they reference Kafka's "purely figurative beings" (Ronell 188) and bizarre institutional settings from *The Trial* in order to provide the loopholes for "Ms. K's" adaptation of narrative genres into meta-medial reflections.

A parable in the vein of Kafka is told when Lynch's protagonist dies. While Laura Dern is hurt and is bleeding from an attack, she comes to rest on Hollywood Boulevard's Walk of Fame, at the notorious intersection of "Hollywood and Vine," where three homeless persons have a conversation. After speaking about how to go from Hollywood to the suburb of Pomona, one of them, played by Japanese actress Nae, tells a story that has mostly been omitted in scholarship. I call this story the parable of the hole in the vagina wall:

> My friend Niko, who lives in Pomona, has a blonde wig. She wears it at parties. But she is on hard drugs and turning tricks now. She looks very good in her blonde wig, just like a movie star. Even girls fall in love with her when she is looking so good in her blonde star wig. She blows kisses and laughs. But she has got a hole in her vagina wall. She has torn a hole into her intestine from her vagina. [Her boyfriend:] Yeah, baby? Why do you tell us that shit? [The homeless woman:] She has seen a doctor, but it is too expensive, and now she knows her

> time has run out. She scores a few more times, and then, like that, she will stay at home with her monkey. She has a pet monkey. This monkey shits everywhere, but she doesn't care. This monkey can scream, it screams like it's in a horror movie. But there are those who are good with animals, who have a way with animals. (2:27:15-2:29:25)

The story centers on a woman who spends her time at home with her monkey. Thus, the parable tells of her withdrawing from social spaces and relations. The reason for her isolation is a hole in her vagina wall. This image, in addition to the stressing of her attractive appearance, frame this withdrawal as one from gender relations and sexual orders.

The story resembles Kafka's parable insofar as the protagonists of both parables remain excluded from any possible movements and interactions. The man is Kafka's parable remains waiting before the first door to the law, unable to enter, while the woman in Lynch's story ends up spending her life in her home. Moreover, both of these figures are contained within "storyless stories": the parables convey a strong sense of their eventlessness, in particular due to their protagonists' lack of movement and action. Also, embedded in the net-like texture of the film, the story produces a pause-like moment of seeming narrative integrity comparable to the cathedral scene in *The Trial*—a text that, though published as a book, actually takes the form of a network of fragments.

Furthermore, the story shares a quality with Kafka's writings in attributing to its protagonist a proximity to animals. Kafka's incorporating of animals, hybrids, and other nonhuman creatures such as mice, dogs, horses, insects, apes, jackals, as well as mysterious beings such as Odradek or a kittenlamb are a ubiquitous dimension of his oeuvre (Lucht 3-4). These creatures often retain human language and thinking, thereby speaking as a deconstructed human or drawing a problematic image of the human as seen through animal eyes (Norris 18-19). In *Inland Empire*, various figures mention that there are “those who have a way with animals.” The description becomes a marker of an otherness that further displaces the woman in the story from the sociality of other humans. She has retired from miming the movie star and to a private life with her per monkey. Deconstructed through “animal eyes” are relations of desire anchored in a narrative tradition that has “fallen ill,” while Lynch’s cinematic adaptation of the creaturely in Kafka centers on myth’s continuity in the Hollywood industry.

Accordingly, medium-specific reflections on gender binaries are further highlighted in the mentioning of the woman’s monkey. The monkey is said to scream like in a horror movie. Kaja Silverman has pointed out in *The Acoustic Mirror* how the popular genre of horror film involves female voices in the form of screams: as involuntary utterances, these screams are one of the many strategies of mainstream fiction to deny female voices authority. Bearing in mind these genre conventions, the monkey in *Inland Empire* seems to mock the stereotypical ways in which cinema involves female voices to construct femininity as passive spectacle. Strikingly, the monkey appears during the final credits of *Inland Empire*: the jumping monkey stresses the cheerful atmosphere at the (almost) all-female party that takes place at Nikki’s house at the end, and suggests that the location of the party may, paradoxically, also be the home of Niko as Nikki’s doppelgänger. Thus, Pomona as a resort from Hollywood is the point of culmination of the film’s events.

The parable's image of a hole in the tissue of the vagina points to the idea of a mutated narrative tissue. Read as the key or "operative system" to the textual environment in the vein of Kafka's parable, Lynch's story points to the overarching texture, suggesting that holes and anomalies displace the film from narrative norms and the gendered subject positions that they entail. As self-reflexive reference, Hollywood Boulevard points to Hollywood as an institution whose narrative grammar and "invisible style" entail a cohesive effect of visual and auditory perception, providing Oedipal story trajectories, and staging woman mostly as erotic spectacle. The suburb of Pomona, the woman's home, then marks a space outside of Hollywood's femininities.

The scene superimposes the telling of the parable with Dern's death struggle. Thereby, a doppelgänger relation between Lynch's protagonist and the woman in the parable is created that resembles the doppelgänger relation between Josef K. and the man before the law. Like Josef K., Dern is presented with a story that seems to contain a possible key to the enigma of the texture through which she is meandering. Although her death echoes that of the man before the law, it is also equated with the self-isolation of the woman in the story and her exit from Hollywood. This figure of an exit in the woman's parable contrasts with the man's impeded entrance into narrative. Kafka's meta-narrative reflection is re-gendering into a withdrawal from becoming narrative image. In other words, the man cannot enter, since a story that leads to the law is narrative naiveté; the woman cannot be found in narrative space when she does not function as love interest. In *The Trial* and its doorkeeper parable, the male protagonist, once the driving force of his journey, is stuck desiring a story, while the "storyless story" of the woman in

Inland Empire and its parable of the whole in the vagina wall expose the terrors of plot and its femininities. Both parables reveal how the textures into which they are embedded operate on the "flipside" of narrative tradition and its gender binaries. In *Inland Empire,* as in Kafka, narrative tradition has "fallen ill" as it becomes suspended and contemplated.

In Lynch's re-gendered variation of Kafka's parable, however, the protagonist makes use of the meta-narrative key presented in the parable. Soon after she throws up and dies, the scene turns out to be a film set. Dern then arises, in contrast to K., who faces his execution. The praise of the director does not change the terrified expression on her face. Neither does she relapse into the role of the admired film star, nor into the dichotomous boundaries that organize representation in terms of a difference between "film scene" and "reality," or, an interior and exterior of diegesis. Lynch's scene and the parable that it contains thereby quote conventions surrounding female stardom in cinema and biological metaphors of womanhood only to transcend these through meta-narrative reflection.

The parable in *Inland Empire* also reflects on the role that whiteness plays in Hollywood cinema's fetishizing of female bodies. Nae's rendition of the parable with a Japanese accent, in addition to the Japanese name of the story's protagonist Niko, stress the colonial dimension of Western popular media. The blonde wig, used by Niko to mime female Hollywood stars, is described as a powerful fetish that renders Niko's body desirable. At the same time, the stereotype of the blonde, iconic female film star refers to the blonde movie star Laura Dern aka Nikki Grace aka Sue Blue. This doppelgänger relation is further stressed by the phonetic similarity between the names of Nikki and

Niko, turning each name into an echo of the other within different cultural spheres. Upon hearing the story, however, the blonde protagonist of *Inland Empire* throws up blood on Hollywood's Walk of Fame (see fig. 9) as if literally sick of the fetishized iconic presence assigned to her by Hollywood. At the same time, the image Dern creates stands in stark contrast to the idealized female body in mainstream cinema, adapting the female spectacle into an expression of terror and torment.

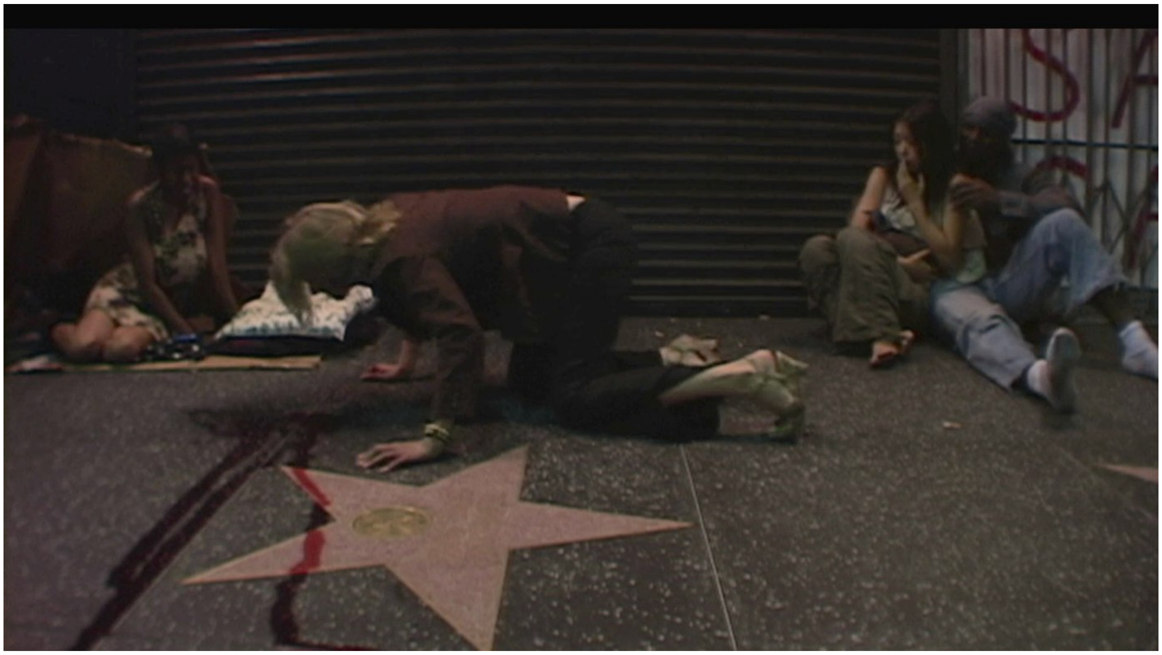

Fig. 9. Laura Dern aka Nikki aka Sue throws up blood on Hollywood's Walk of Fame. *Inland Empire.* Dir. David Lynch. Perf. Laura Dern, Justin Theroux. Concorde 2007.

The protagonist later presents a gesture that points to her understanding of the parable. Dern reiterates the image of the hole in the vagina wall in a different scene, in which she burns a cigarette hole into the fabric of her underwear. The image cites the cue mark of celluloid roles—a technology that is abandoned by Lynch's digital production concomitantly with cinema's narrative conventions. The cigarette hole then appears as a huge hole on the walls of a different room, interweaving different dimensions and introducing the idea of a micro-level of her actions. The image subtly invites us to contemplate the digital video material as the texture's lowest micro-structure, relating the film's materiality to the mutated narrative tissue. Thus, the digital adaptation of *The Trial* recasts the idea of a texture that operates outside the dichotomies of gender, space, and linear time in terms of a new subject position: instead of dying in a storyless story, the protagonist takes up the agency to manipulate the network through which she is moving.

Scholarship on Lynch has mostly either focused on narratological considerations or discussions on Lynch's female characters, largely neglecting how Lynch's narrative experiments and negotiation of femininity inform each other. It is in particular *Inland Empire*'s concern with female stereotypes that have given rise to feminist interpretations. Anna Katharina Schaffner considers the three latest films by Lynch, *Lost Highway*, *Mulholland Drive*, and *Inland Empire*, to form a trilogy on "the fatal dynamics of binary thinking," understanding *Inland Empire* to be Lynch's "most explicitly feminist movie" (270). Schaffner's account of Lynch's critique of representational codes relies on her suggestion that *Inland Empire* presents "paranoid-schizoid splittings of the female love object" into virgin and whore, ideal and nightmare. However, her drawing Nikki Grace's "journey of self-discovery" (285) as her transcending these binaries and becoming "herself" (272) relies on her organizing of the many disparate character fragments into a binary of Nikki as ideal film star on the one hand, and Sue as incarnation of a castrating, violent male nightmare (287), which cannot established without a doubt due to the film's net-like structure. On the other hand, analyses of *Inland Empire*'s technological and narratological reflections dislocate their observations regarding the female character from these considerations. For instance, Thomas Elsaesser's reading of Lynch's project as what he calls a "mind-game film," a framing device to subsume contemporary films that involve "complex storytelling" and disorient the spectator regarding the reality status of what is being shown (Mind-Game Film 19-20), deals with Lynch's female protagonists in terms of psychoanalytic pathology rather than narrative function.

Rather, I suggest that *Inland Empire*'s feminist force lies in the film's integrating of contemplations on both gender representation and technology. Bearing in mind our contemporary understanding of gender as an effect of representation, the very rupture of linear narrative suspends gender expectations in so far as these are shaped by storytelling. The film's inscriptions of digitization contribute to this negotiation of narrative tradition, exploring how the digital age has changed cinema's place in contemporary communication. Moreover, *Inland Empire*'s cybercinematic experiments suggest that we might find ourselves in an advantageous historic position when it comes to re-evaluating the media traditions surrounding the static screens of movie theaters and paper pages—in general, and in relation to gender.

References to the genre of melodrama contribute to *Inland Empire*'s cybercinematic reflection on female subjectivity. *Inland Empire* was advertised with the tagline "A Woman in Trouble," which refers to the genre just as much as the romantic triangle of Nikki, her co-star Devon, and Nikki's husband, and the dramatic love story of the film-within-a-film *High on Blue Tomorrows*. The genre of melodrama addresses mainly female audiences, showing female protagonists involved in "troubled" Oedipal trajectories until they finally arrive at proper femininity. In *Inland Empire*, however, the genre is disassembled, as the chopping of the film character into fragments of identity leaves us questioning not only what kind of "trouble" we are witnessing, but also if we can call who we see a proper "woman." While the pusher of Dern's body is the cybercinematic environment rather than any story, identity is not achieved, but fragmented in the sampling activity of the female body presence.

The cybernetic notion of the posthuman provides the framing device for *Inland Empire*'s performance of subjectivity. The notion of the posthuman, coined by N. Katherine Hayles, addresses the idea that subjectivity is de-centered in favor of a new connectivity with technology (see ch. 1). The latter disciplines human users to coordinate their perceptions with algorithmic procedures. The posthuman, therefore, is an "amalgam, a collection of heterogeneous components, a material-informational entity whose boundaries undergo continuous construction and reconstruction" (Hayles 3). Lynch's production moves away from film as a preexisting artifact and toward a liminal position between the cinema and digital media, thus foreshadowing interactive interfaces.

Inland Empire genders the performance of a de-centered posthuman subjectivity that contemplates femininity. Lynch's project thus addresses not only temporal and spatial orders, but also gendered positions anchored in a linear narrative. From that perspective, the protagonist's encounters with groups of women and the many kaleidoscopic instances of violence against women that appear throughout *Inland Empire* are connected to the cybercinematic quality of the film. These address a tradition of cinematographic violence against the female body and undo cinematic narrative codes of gendered subjectivity.

Whereas Lynch's previous film *Mulholland Drive* addressed a female actress's struggle against the Hollywood machine, this struggle has found a possible solution in *Inland Empire.* Cybercinematics allows the actress to switch off between different levels of her cinematic representation. The iconic "Woman," constructed through conventions surrounding female stardom in the Hollywood cinema, is thereby rearticulated as the distributed cognition of the posthuman subject.

Towards the end of *Inland Empire,* the opportunity to playfully rearticulate (female) subjectivity is passed down to the spectators. The protagonist does not seem to have acquired the agency to sample this network for her own pleasure, but rather is involved in mostly opaque or terrifying events. However, Laura Dern's actions culminate in an encounter with the crying woman from the beginning of *Inland Empire* who had been watching her on her TV. The moment Dern enters, the two women's encounter also becomes visible on the television screen. Dern embraces her female spectator and disappears, conveying the sense of her redemption from her own representation. In Dern's embrace of the spectators' alter ego, the question of how to sample the cybercinematic realm in favor of female agency is passed on to the audience of *Inland Empire*. The joyful, almost all-female party that gathers during the end credits suggests an optimistic view of the relationship between women and technology in the Digital Age. Thus, what I have called "cybercinematics" not only "loops" storytelling, but also female corporeality outside of cinema. That makes *Inland Empire* a chick flick for the posthuman.

The title *Inland Empire* can be reconsidered against the backdrop of all of these observations. It has been found to refer to both an inner space, or figurative interior land, as well as to an outer space, namely the desert region called the Inland Empire, which is near Los Angeles (Rebhandl n. pag., Seeßlen 252). Moreover, due to the network structure of Lynch's digital video project, *Inland Empire* comes to denote a non-location, a realm whose very characteristic is delocalization providing a spatially, temporally, and stylistically heterogeneous realm in which the protagonist can move. No point of departure or end can be doubtlessly ascribed to this movement. Rather, just like Josef K.'s *Trial* (*Der Process*) remains a "process," Dern's adaptation of the storyless story remains suspended as a "process" as well: she adapts and unwrites the hero's journey, along with the spectators' desire for reading, for the Digital Age.

6 Conclusion

The cases of adaptation that I explored show adaptation's potential to provide critical perspectives on media technologies and the ways in which these shape our knowledge and experience. I have argued that adaptations from one medium into another bear a comparative potential that is able to enrich the self-reflexive poetics that many literary texts present to readers when seen on their own. Readers and viewers encounter various versions of a "work" and are thereby challenged to reflect on an intermedial constellation that replaces the idea of a work as a merely ideal construct.

Taking the representation of gender as a focal point, my analyses centered on gender binaries as an effect of discursive representation across media. In have read adaptation as an intermedial intervention, which has repercussions for the representation and hence construction of gender: I have argued that adaptation is a practice that is able to address and displace the ways in which representational conventions in literature and film shape gender binaries and exclude subjectivities beyond these binaries. The cases of adaptation that I discussed create intermedial configurations that challenge readers/ viewers to navigate textual networks where both gendered subject positions and spatial boundaries are dissolved as narrative progress remains suspended.

Ingeborg Bachmann's and Werner Schroeter's *Malina*, reconsidered as an intermedial constellation, turns adaptation into a practice that amplifies self-reflexive poetics. I argued that *Malina* (1971), the poetic experiment and feminist cult novel by Austrian woman writer Ingeborg Bachmann, inscribes intermedial cues that contribute to the book's meta-narrative poetics and rearticulation of gender binaries. Moreover, these intermedial references to film, the opera, audio recording technologies, and other media suggest the text's interpretability, granting adaptations into other media an opportunity to respond.

By revisiting Werner Schroeter's film adaptation of the same name (1991), I showed how the film responds to both the text's reflections on writing and on other media technologies through a negotiation of its own cinematic medium, negotiating gender binaries as positions within relations of looking. My tracing of the film's leitmotif of mirroring shows how the latter evolves into the film's aesthetics of mirroring: while the novel addresses primarily literary traditions, the adaptation's aesthetics of mirroring undermine cinematic traditions in the way that they transgress the cinematic space, allowing the female protagonist and cinematic alter ego of Bachmann's narrator to perform a revision of cinematic codes and exit from representation.

The case of Kafka and Lynch shows how through adaptation, a modern alienation from mythical traditions can be taken up from the perspective of contemporary media innovation. I have shown how Franz Kafka's *The Trial* involves gender binaries as one of the discursive paradigms that become suspended in the text. The nexus of gender and space developed in *The Trial* adds to the text's net-like structure, contributing to the conflicted relationship that the text has with narrative tradition. Moreover, in anticipation of my analysis of Lynch's adaptation, I have suggested the medium of hypertext fiction as a new device to frame (and possibly re-publish) the literary practices in *The Trial*.

My reading of David Lynch's latest feature *Inland Empire* has considered the film to be an adaptation of both Franz Kafka's *The Trial* and of the hyperlink logic of digital networks. Lynch's project, with its female protagonist's meandering transposes the nexus of gender and space developed in *The Trial* into what I have called a cybercinematic texture. Lynch's and Dern's adaptation of Hollywood's female stardom, genres, and indebtedness to archaic narrative traditions dissolves linearity and spatio-temporal coherence into an intermedial configuration in-between cinema and digital media. *Inland Empire* thereby "digitizes" texts and films into a network that foreshadows interactive interfaces, transcending gender binaries through posthuman subjectivity while still pointing to the abandoned media and subjectivities.

If the digital age has changed literature's and cinema's place in contemporary communication, we might find ourselves in an advantageous historic position when it comes to re-evaluating these media's representational traditions. Rather than the static screens of movie theaters and paper pages, we engage with literature, film, and other content through a wide range of interfaces and the subjectivities that these entail. All of these concerns touch upon questions of intermediality, which require that we revisit 20th-century academic knowledge on literature and film. Adaptation may become a figure of thought that, by reading one medium through another, fosters the literacy necessary to read the 20th century through the needs of this one, and begin reading the 21st century and its challenges and opportunities. Our everyday interaction with fractured and interactive digital screens might make us more prepared than ever to take up the challenge that texts like Bachmann's and Kafka's, as well as films like Schroeter's and

Lynch's pose to readers and viewers, whose language of fragmentation was once deemed to be avant-garde. These constellations of text and film, by staging themselves as a literature after literature, a cinema after cinema, suggest that they construct a gender after gender. This allows us to explore an "ex-gender,"[67] a subjectivity before/after popular storytelling's gender binaries.

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[67] My rhetorics here refer back to my discussion of Lippit's notion of the "ex-cinema" in the introductory chapter.

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