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## **'It wants to become like us!' The Dialogue of Adaptation and its Embodiments in the Body Horror genre through Literature and Film**

The smell of blood. The glint of a knife. The scream of the unlucky victim as they are hacked to pieces by some monster. Every gruesome visual encouraging visceral disgust. That's the trait of body horror, a subgenre devoted to torturing, warping, and destroying the human body. This makes the voyeuristic presentation of these images vital to the appeal of body horror. The most prominent mediums through which body horror is expressed are literature and film, and the dialogue between these two is unique. We are thus posed a question: what is more horrifying, the image we are exposed to through our senses, or the image we interpret from literary stimulus?

The image's centrality within body horror and its embodiment lends itself to adaptation theory as a theoretical discipline and to the dialogue between novels and their film adaptations. Bodily mutilation is communicated in novels by authors through various literary devices designed to prompt the reader's horror and disgust. However, once the ink dries on the page, these techniques elicit individualised internal images. Each reader will imagine the scene differently, channelled on a 'higher, more cerebral, and transensual level' (Stam 6) than possible with the fixed narrative interpretation in a film. On screen we no longer require imagination; the physical details of a scene play out in a way chosen by filmmakers, for budgetary and production reasons, or cinematic/symbolic effect. The scene becomes a fixed image, the sole associated representation of that narrative moment (while also potentially defining the scene within the source novel too). Thus, the process of adaptation becomes cyclical, with any scene from the film adaptation informing a reader's interpretation of the novel. This rootedness in image is traditionally perceived as of lesser artistic value than the

interpretation required for reading a novel; ``contemporary theorists hostile to cinema... reject visual arts as nurturing illusion.'' (Stam 5) However, this viewer reception theory is subverted by body horror. It relishes in the illusory spectacle of bodily violence and indeed requires a desire for spectacle to exist. Badley summates this tableaux effect as a ``series of scenes, each displaying a 'graphic sense of physicality'... a spectacle of effect that momentarily arrests the plot'' (6&7), a feature uncommon in literature.

The politics and practicalities involved in adapting body horror texts to film thus become anchored in the dialogue of adaptation theory itself, and how source and adapted material are defined by each other. I will briefly discuss the theories of key scholars Jørgen Bruhn and Robert Stam, and how their work applies here. I will then dissect the qualities of the body horror genre that enables adapted films, more often than not, to achieve greater critical success than their sources; ``the horror film abounds with more examples of prequels, sequels, and remakes than any other film genre in the history of cinema... indeed, they frequently abound with adaptation on a thematic level.'' (Hand & McRoy 1) I'll support this by clarifying the practices used to create body horror images (linguistic devices in literature, cinematographic choices in film). I will then link these ideas to case studies on prominent body horror films and their literary sources, analysing how individual visceral scenes are realised. Concurrently, I will also analyse both the filmmaking process and the cultural zeitgeist that informs these films, looking for their effect on the images we are exposed to and their disparity or similarity to the textual source. From here I'll be able to extrapolate the success or failure of each medium in fulfilling the tenants of the body horror genre.

Adaptation studies has traditionally been viewed as a one-way relationship; culturally important literature has its narratives, characters, and settings raided for material for inauthentic films destined for slovenly mass consumption. Scholar Jørgen Bruhn and his co-authors second this idea, claiming that ``the film industry, and Hollywood in particular, take advantage of recycling well-known material as a marketing strategy'' (2). There are greater financial pressures on films than literature, due to the former's higher production costs. The reason filmmakers often use literature

as a source material is the existence of a pre-existing audience, giving the project an in-built financial edge. However, Bruhn et al. subsequently note that contemporary adaptation theory has broadened its outlook, and it's now theorised that; ``adaptation may not be a one-way transport from source to result, as previously thought, but rather a two-way, dialogic process.'' (4) Contemporary literature is also guided by finance, however. After the release of a film adaptation, the publishing company will often release a media tie-in edition of the source novel to actively associate itself with its film adaptation. Film is no longer used to regurgitate literary narratives. The relationship has evolved to the point where the two mediums are intertwined as commercial assets. Therefore, with the dialogue between literature and film now demonstrable on a symbiotic level, we must consider another concern of adaptation theory: fidelity.

The importance of fidelity to adaptation theory used to be all consuming. Adaptations were only considered successful if they accurately relayed the book's narrative with minimal changes. However, both Bruhn et. al and Stam agree that this no longer holds weight. It's noted in *Adaptation Studies*.. that while the fidelity theory has not been abandoned in contemporary thinking, it has become necessary to ``translate fidelity into the more neutral, and thus useful, measure of similarities and differences on various levels of the compared texts.'' (Bruhn et. al 5) Stam corroborates this theory, claiming that the fidelity model is now only partially influential in judging a film's qualities (14). A movie may have poor acting, but strong thematic connection to its source novel can redeem it critically. The same applies to a well-made film that departs from its source substantially. We also must consider how choices in the adaptation process come to define both source material and film adaptation. Stam makes numerous references to the inability of film to depict literary scenes and references the act of reading as an ``intimate exchange, read through our interjected desires and hopes.'' (14) However, he also makes thought-provoking reference to the opposite idea: Transplanting real-life production choices onto inanimate words on the page (14). With this two-way dialogue evident in adaptation theory, we see the potential for adaptations of genre texts to succeed in presenting body horror images in ways that the ethereal nature of novels simply cannot.

While we should note prominent adaptation theories, we also need to analyse the methods used in novels and films to present body horror. Authors use metaphors and 'sound of language' literary devices to present images of bodily destruction. Metaphors give readers a comparable image to aid in understanding otherwise incomprehensible narrative violence. Sound features, such as alliteration and onomatopoeia, are used for rhythm and to add texture to a scene. Words are selected to enhance vulgarity, and sentences are either lengthened to privilege horrific descriptions or shortened to heighten the tension. These literary devices are all just stimuli though. Readers imagine their own horrific scenarios, making the process of reading body horror one of adaptation in and of itself. However, once a novel is adapted, this process becomes linear and fixed. The image becomes grounded in the reality of film production, creating a single scenic interpretation. Filmmakers replace literary devices with special effects, costumes, sound effects, and lighting that give the viewer a clear sense of space, place, and action. These production choices become the source of horror. Special effects and costumes allow us to view more realistic mutilations and become involved with a narrative world visually like our own. Sound is used to heighten horror and tension and accentuate the shock of the onscreen violence.

Richard J. Hand summates this idea in his discussion of Mary Shelley's novel *Frankenstein*. He explores the iconic creation of Frankenstein's monster, a horrific reincarnation of pieces of the human body stitched together. In the novel the scene is 'left in ellipses, not dissimilarly to a Greek tragedy where violence is left strictly offstage.'" (12) Shelley simply leaves the scene's horror to the reader's imagination. However, the iconic image of the monster coming alive is enacted in its first film adaptation; 'it wants us to see the monster come into being, fulfilling... a desire to see.'" (Hand 12) This subconscious desire to see what will horrify us is what body horror feeds on. The viewer is made a compliant voyeur to nightmarish images, and films become platforms for assaulting the senses. Stam summates this as film's ability to 'more directly cause bodily responses than novels.'" (6) This causes us to further question the traditional critical hierarchy for viewing literature-to-film adaptations.

My selected case studies are all important works in the body horror canon and all bear evidence of various adaptation theories at work in delivering shocking body horror sequences. I intend to explore the literary sources and selected adaptations of *The Fly*, *The Thing*, and *Hellraiser*. I will explore the author's decisions regarding eliciting horror at certain points in their narratives and analyse these within the framework of the story's social context. I will also compare other adaptations of the source material to my selected cases (the 1986, 1982, and 1987 film adaptations respectively). It's no coincidence that my case studies were made in the 1980's; this was a celebrated decade for horror films, with the body horror subgenre reaching new grotesque heights of popularity. As Badley puts it, "in the 1980's the horror film became an agonistic 'body language' for a culture that perceived itself as grotesquely embodied and in transformation." (7) The decade's zeitgeist was conducive to expressing body horror stories, and my case studies are giants in the canon that ultimately outshone their source material.

*The Fly* is indelibly scarred onto the body horror canon, thanks to its gruesome narrative of cross-species metamorphosis and technological disaster. The novella was written by George Langelaan for *Playboy* magazine in June 1957 and was recognised in the Annual of the Year's Best Science Fiction. The story exemplifies the popularity of science fiction in the 1950's; following World War Two, new scientific discoveries drove society forward at a frantic pace into seemingly inexhaustible possibility. Never-before seen mechanised consumerism and the nuclear threat fuelled a literary reaction exploring the fears of technology. The novella embodies this anxiety, culminating in the protagonist being destroyed by technology that he ultimately couldn't control. However, the novella more closely resembles a mystery narrative than a horror, with the narrative structured around the investigation of the scientist's death. Indeed, the iconic moment of transformation occurs second-hand through a confession by the scientist's wife. This oddly undersells the narrative's most grotesque moment, although the scientist is briefly described post-transformation:

'he had a dreadful white hairy head, with a low flat skull and two pointed ears... but the eyes! Or rather where the eyes should have been were two brown bumps the size of saucers. Instead of a mouth... was a long hairy vertical

slit, from which hung a black quivering trunk which widened at the end, trumpet-like, and from which saliva kept dripping'' (Langelaan).

This passage uses comparative language and metaphor to render the horror imaginable for the reader, and bodily words like 'skull' and 'saliva' convey the image's viscerality. However, the description of the unfortunate scientist throws up notable differences to what we see in film adaptations; Langelaan's scientist becomes mutated with both a fly and a previously teleported cat. Consequently, the scientist's death is inevitable. Unable to recover the long-disappeared cat, the hope of reversing the process proposed in the numerous film adaptations becomes redundant. Indeed, this inevitability detracts from the grotesquery of his metamorphosis. The scientist/fly creature is condemned to assisted suicide, free of further traumatic bodily destruction. The filmic adaptations ultimately shun this narrative in favour of voyeurising the scientist's transformation and death.

Consequently, the battle for life, and viewing every gory detail of body change, becomes the central concern of subsequent film adaptations. *The Fly* received its first onscreen treatment in 1958, directed by Kurt Neumann. The adaptation closely followed the novella's narrative, with a few minor changes, like shifting the setting to Quebec. However, the most identifiable change in the film was the nature of the transformation. Whilst the novella's transformation was irreversible, the film adaptation raised the emotional stakes by removing the disappeared cat from the narrative. This gives the scientist the opportunity to save himself. However, this came with the narrative proviso that the scientist had a finite amount of time to reverse the transformation before his mind became overtaken by the fly's instincts. This potential change into something human, yet inhuman, is the first step on the road to a true body horror. However, with the film made during the Motion Picture Production Code (MPPC) era, censorship of graphic violence prevented the film from going any further towards a body horror spectacle. Despite this, the 1958 film was still an important work in the body horror canon and contained one image of central importance. Unlike in the novel, where the fly-human (the antithesis of the human-fly protagonist) is mercifully killed, the film audience is privy to the humanoid creature's impending death trapped in a spider web. As Hand

notes, ``half-human, half-animal figures act as physical embodiments of dissociation, according to psychoanalytical theory, and have sexual resonance.'' (17) This image, a sequence used to shock viewers – common in body horror – also embodies a central point on the adaptation spectrum. The film was a blend of original ideas, designed to further the horror unprivileged in the novel, and fidelity to the source novella. This sequence also sewed the idea of psychological dissociation into *The Fly*'s mythos and could have inspired the psychosexual themes to come in Cronenberg's 1986 adaptation.

Cronenberg's *Fly* was a product of its zeitgeist, one of many body horror films that engulfed American society in this period. One prominent theme in the film was hyper-masculinity. Badley notes that ``Brundlefly [the mutated scientist protagonist] is the male subject's confrontation with the 'female' terrain of the body. He embodies the male hysteria of the 1980's.'' (128) Male hysteria is a psychosexual theme pervading film and literature in the 1980's, focused on the male reaction to the rise of minority social viewpoints in the 1970's. This reaction took the form of gender-confused retaliation, with male characters often embodying hyper-masculine and phallic ideals. This theme was strongly evident in the decade's action films and deconstructed in 80s horror cinema, with destruction of the body the perfect vehicle to counter this hysteria. During this time, special effects and make-up artistry also developed rapidly; more realistic gore effects could be added to films, making it 'the decade of the blood bath'. The time was perfect for up-and-coming horror director Cronenberg to adapt a classic. It had been 21 years since the last *Fly* sequel, and the director had a golden opportunity to make his mark on the narrative, one that would deal with the decade's general and psychosexual themes.

Cronenberg made wholesale changes from both the novella and the first film adaptation, changing the story's narrative and the iconographic style to suit his 1980's audience. He aimed to privilege the view of the scientist, re-christened Seth Brundle, and his horrific rise to a hyper-masculine ideal and collapse to sub-human nightmare; ``*The Fly* takes the cultural fear of, and desire for, body metamorphosis to a new level of horror and sophistication.'' (Egers 148) This view of the male in crisis would be written in flesh. The scientist's transformation becomes more voyeurised than previously, and

Brundle's change not only embodies the desire to see bodily destruction, but also an ongoing dialogue between the film and its source. Adaptation in and of itself is an obvious theme in the film. The change from human to monster, strength to weakness, flesh to exo-skeleton, is continuous and featured in increasingly grotesque ways. The film has thematic obsession with flesh; Badley attests that ''*The Fly* gives flesh its own language'' (127), and there are repeated cinematic references to its importance. From the teleportation device's inability to teleport organic material to Brundle's girlfriend Veronica quoting 'the flesh makes you crazy' in a fit of passion, to a post-mutated Brundle saying 'you are afraid to go beyond society's idea of flesh', the film is obsessed with the disembodied body. The camera fetishises Veronica's limbs during sex, or Brundle's as they mutate, with close ups. Towards the film's climax, when Brundle attacks Veronica's ex-lover, he uses acid to burn off his limbs in intense close ups. While this heightens the film's graphic violence, it also speaks to Cronenberg's intention to show flesh as an object of cinematic focus, a theme neglected in the novella but tied to the prevalence of iconography in cinema. At the film's climax, the fully mutated Brundlefly corners a pregnant Veronica in the teleporter to try fuse their bodies together. This action is explained by Egers as ''playing on spectators' sense of cultural taboo: the patriarchal law is threatened by dissolving the Oedipal triangle (mother, father, and child) into the murderous/suicidal sameness of the narcissistic mirror.'' (149) Now, adaptation doesn't just threaten humanity; it threatens the very fabric of society. Although this horrific change is avoided, in the process the Brundlefly is melded with the teleporter itself, metal and flesh infused in another taboo nightmare. With that final action, male power is utterly removed, and this fusion also acts as a wry nod to the fears of technology prevalent in the novella.

Another major element of the 1980's *Fly* was the voyeurism of the scientist's transformation. In the novella and 1950's film adaptation, the scientist's transformation was instantaneous and mostly hidden, the horrors of his body change seconded to purpose a mystery narrative. Instead, Cronenberg used the power of iconography discussed by Stam to show Brundle's collapse into mutated horror. Interestingly, at first the mutation results in the weedy Brundle's masculine qualities becoming accentuated. He initially adopts a fly's biological

qualities, gaining incredible strength, heightened senses, and a boosted sex drive that allows him to sexually dominate Veronica. This latter point is particularly interesting. Prior to his teleportation experiment, Brundle was sexually inept. Veronica was the active partner, coercing him for sex while Brundle was relegated to a submissive, 'feminine' role. The mutation gave Brundle temporary power and pushed him towards the thematic peak of male hysteria, before Cronenberg tears this down by literally stripping Brundle of his male body. Cruz notes that ``there is nothing particularly glorious about it, although Seth himself seems morbidly fascinated with his transformation.'' (163) The transformation is slow, painful, and physically debilitating, unlike in the novella or first film adaptation. Brundle's body parts literally fall away, and he forms a grotesque collection in his bathroom cupboard as a tribute to the male body. Special effects and make-up were vital in presenting this change in a more realistic way than ever attempted in adapting the story to film before. As another example, at the film's climax Brundle's head splits apart to reveal a fly head underneath. This is far more graphic than anything depicted in any previous incarnation of *The Fly*; ``The Brundlefly is an abomination, not only for its appearance and corruption of an erstwhile human body, but also for its physiological impracticalities and inefficiencies.'' (Cruz 163) In the novella and 1950's film, the scientist's meddling with science was punished by death. In the 1980's *Fly*, Brundle's crime goes beyond science. His male privilege must too be destroyed, and the stripping of masculinity and his reduction to a tragic mixed-species abomination must be shown in graphic detail to satisfy a 1980's audience.

Every incarnation of the *The Fly*, be it the novella, 50s film, or its 80s reboot, are products of the zeitgeist from which they were produced. But they are also examples of how adaptation dialogue affects narrative. Langelaan's scientist and Cronenberg's Brundlefly are very different, both human and otherwise, and their mutations are influenced by their art form. Langelaan's change was sudden, inevitable and tragic; Cronenberg's was slow, avoidable and punishing. Cronenberg's Brundlefly is an embodied example of adaptation at work and speaks to the necessity of image in communicating bodily change more effectively in body horror. The 1980's *Fly*, in its attempt to punish phallic primacy, superseded the need for source fidelity, and instead chose to frame the scientist's

transformation in its full iconographic glory. This makes the 80s *Fly* a more effective body horror work than its source.

*The Thing* is another narrative inseparable from the body horror genre. A shape-shifting alien which can imitate any organic material has incredible potential for grotesque transformations, and the paranoia raised by questioning another's humanity is the lynchpin of John W. Campbell's novella *Who Goes There?* Published in the *Astounding Science-Fiction* magazine in 1938, it was released during science fiction's 'Golden Age'. *Who Goes There?*, however, leans heavily into the horror genre. The story takes place in Antarctica, not in space, and Campbell perceptibly tries to generate repulsion using graphic descriptions of inhuman mutation. Indeed, the story relies heavily on visceral language to show the alien's grotesque fluidity of form:

``The Thing screamed in feral hate, a lashing tentacle wiping at blinded eyes. For a moment it crawled on the floor, savage tentacles lashing out, body twitching. Then it staggered up again, blinded eyes working, boiling hideously, the crushed flesh sloughing away in sodden gobbets'' (Campbell)

Campbell uses long sentences broken by commas to hold our attention while emphasising every awful individual detail. Indeed, its description of grotesque metamorphosis and bodily horror is far more blatant than in Langelaan's *The Fly*, and its scientific jargon and descriptions of biological processes far more in-depth. Indeed, the novella's true genre, despite its horrific descriptions, remains science fiction. The novella's characters are all scientists, unmentioned in subsequent film adaptations. Discovering who amongst the crew is alien is exposed via rational experimentation, rather than the sudden violent outbursts seen in the film adaptations. Additionally, the alien in *Who Goes There?* is genuinely alien in its true form, as seen in the excerpt. In the 1982 *The Thing*, the alien is never seen its true form, only ever a mutated hybrid. As such, this new angle on the horror of metamorphosis becomes the primary focus for film adaptations.

It took over ten years for an adaptation of *Who Goes There?* This delay was potentially due to the lack of recognition for the novella; unlike Langelaan's *The Fly*, Campbell's work won no literary awards, despite the critical praise it received. However, by the early 1950's, with the Cold War starting to

influence American culture in earnest, the time seemed right for the public to witness the horror of a shape-shifting alien set on world domination. The atmospheric paranoia so prominent in the novella suited the zeitgeist of 1950's United States, with the threat of Communist infiltration a concern realised in the 'witch hunts' of potential Communists in the government and Hollywood. The timing is no coincidence, but a very deliberate choice to exploit the cultural fears of the day and draw parallels between Communism and the alien antagonist. This point is summated by Andy Smith as ``the Cold War bodily invasion paranoia of *The Thing* responded to the cultural pressures and ideological processes that resulted in mutated forms of the genre.'' (85) The 1951 adaptation of the novella was called *The Thing from Another World*, immediately establishing creative distance from the novella. Indeed, there were wholesale changes, with director Christian Nyby not only influenced by cultural factors, but by the MPP Code that similarly constrained the 1950's *The Fly* adaptation. In *The Thing from Another World*, the alien antagonist is changed from animalistic to plant-based. This immediately negates the fears of seeing mutating human flesh. Additionally, the creature no longer absorbed people and assumed their form. Instead, it simply sought human blood to survive. This removed the potential horror of seeing the body warped inhumanly and made film production less challenging. This film considers the dialogue of adaptation thoroughly; although it's similar to the source, it sought to establish its own creative identity and reflect the political distrust of the time. Most importantly, it primarily espoused this political agenda, rather than producing a narrative designed to disgust. While *The Thing from Another World* cannot quite be considered a body horror film, it does play a vital part in reimagining the novella. It plays into the iconography theory highlighted by Stam, giving Campbell's words fixed imagery and soundscape that later adaptations draw inspiration from.

Famous for his 70s slasher *Halloween*, John Carpenter was very aware of the 1980's cultural values and taste in cinema. Body horror was popular, and Carpenter, like Cronenberg, was adept at knowing what to give the audience. It was the perfect time to adapt *Who Goes There?* in a way that could capture the horror and claustrophobia of the novella. And 1982's *The Thing* certainly did that. Carpenter awareness of adaptation theory allowed him to craft a film that knowingly celebrated the

novella's narrative style and imagery, whilst also striking out as a film definitively of its time. The choice of title, similar to *The Thing From...*, is worthy of note. A contraction of the 1951 film's title, it forthrightly sets Carpenter's film apart from the novella. However, contracting the name also stands *The Thing* apart from *The Thing From...*; less campy and more ominous, the Carpenter's title reflects the film's grittiness and viscerality. *The Thing* further adapted the novella's narrative to better formulae it towards a 1980's audience. In the novella, the alien has powers of telekinesis and thought control; the alien in *The Thing* doesn't have that power, restricting the creature's threat to purely physical. This speaks of a conscious production choice to focus on the visual extravaganza of the body's destruction, rather than a more intangible depiction of mind control. Another important difference in the depiction of the alien antagonist between novella and film is the physical state of its body. Cruz notes that "the alien in *The Thing* is a creature... driven by metamorphosis. Rarely is its true form seen, for it spends most of its life in the guise of another organism. It is in an almost constant state of flux, an unstable mass." (163) Although Cruz is talking from a biological perspective, we see this as applicable to both the film's narrative choices and prominent adaptation theory. In the novella, the alien is distinctly and classically alien, with tentacles and three eyes. This makes Carpenter's decision to change these details fascinating. In *The Thing*, we are never privy to the alien's true form and we only ever see it transforming, mutating, or splicing the bodies it has possessed. This makes *The Thing* more effective as a body horror work for several reasons. Firstly, it feeds paranoia by making the human body, the surface layer, the enemy. Instability between two things is truly more terrifying in images than in words; by their very nature, images are fixed in the 'realness' of their composite materials. As Badley notes, "The Thing... culminated in hyperbolically surreal extravaganzas whose transformations and contortions only... the great fantastic painters could equal." (7) This establishes the primacy of imagery over metaphor in its ability to contort the socially accepted dimensions of the human body. The film medium also allowed for a great number of instances of disturbing bodily destruction, as the alien splices bodies or instils animal life into disembodied limbs. Indeed, the film shows a preoccupation with animals. The most striking image of the feature is the head of one of the

assimilated crew members stretching off its body, growing spider-like appendages and crawling away. Eric White discusses the evolutionary implications of *The Thing* alien in his seminal essay *The Erotics of Being*. Within, he asserts ``the Thing powerfully registers the anguish and horror occasioned by the recognition of human subjection to evolutionary process.'' (399) Essentially, White claims that the alien is truly terrifying because it so blatantly ignores the human mind-set of our physical form being the peak of the evolutionary chain. By carelessly contorting our form, the alien makes us question our biological viability and stability. This re-asserts Stam's earlier claim about the power iconography; as the alien destroys the image of the human body, horror is generated by the 'real' image, rather than the internalised imagining of the action. Disembodied limbs are a common sight in the body horror genre because they fulfil the same destructive function. In *The Thing*, we see heads split open, chests cave in to reveal gaping mouths, and faces twist and melt together. This splitting of the body, limbs and features in rebellion against the whole, is elaborated by White as ``The Thing undeniably evokes fascination, of a forbidden object of desire... the very intensity of the pleasure-pain of horror may propel the viewers of this film beyond themselves to becoming unclassifiable and unnameable shapeshifters.'' (402) The distortion of the human form becomes the viewer's primal fear because if the body onscreen is unstable, sub-consciously we fear that we too will come apart.

*The Thing*, in the mediums through which it has been presented, is a striking, terrifying, and un-understandable creature with no regard for the sanctity of the human body. However, while this core idea of manipulating the body is omnipresent across the novella and adaptations, the presentation of this change is adapted to suit the cultural zeitgeist of the age in which the work was produced. The novella aimed was written as science fiction driven by humanity's quest for logic in the face of alien-ness. The 1950's film used the adaptation of the human body as an allegory for global Communist infiltration. And the 1980's film used the body as a site for destruction to satisfy the demands of its body horror-obsessed audience. These works are self-aware and rooted in adaptation theory, addressing the theories of Jørgen Bruhn et al., which claim

adaptation is a reflexive re-marketing strategy to generate maximum potential profit.

Clive Barker is one of the seminal authors in the body horror canon, his works championed for their sexual depravity and gross bodily excess. His 1986 novella, *The Hellbound Heart*, is exemplary. It's about a mystical puzzle box which acts as a gateway to an alternate dimension filled with sadomasochist beings. After the box is opened by a murderer, the horrors of another dimension are wreaked upon an unfortunate family. The *Hellbound Heart* was a critical success, and only a year later was adapted to film by Barker himself. This creates an interesting difference between this example and my other case studies - and indeed the body horror genre as a whole - in that both source and adaptation have the same 'author'. The novella and film consequently have a simpler relationship than my other case studies; with little (likely) differences in creative vision, changes made at production level can be viewed as primarily monetary or responsive to censorship. The novella has extreme descriptions of nihilism, lust, and sadomasochist pleasure. As Barker's protagonist says "It could be an orgasmic whoop, instead of the terror she'd taken it for. It was an easy mistake to make." (33) Pain and pleasure are inseparably intertwined in the narrative as the human body is destroyed and remade. Hand & McRoy make an interesting observation about Barker's work and audience along this line of thinking, "a prolific horror author, Barker's work holds particularly strong appeal for female fans." (50) *The Hellbound Heart*, similar to the 1980's *Fly* and *Thing* films, shows a greater preoccupation with the voyeuristic destruction of the male body, rather than the female body (as is more usual in body horror). A heroic female perspective attracts female viewers and allows them to observe the metaphorical sacrifice of the male form. This, and the shocking viscerality of Barker's writing, can be seen here:

"in one last act of defiance, he cranked up his heavy head and stared at her, meeting her gaze with eyes from which all bafflement and all malice had fled. They glittered as they rested on her, pearls in offal. In response, the chains were drawn an inch tighter, but the Cenobites gained no further cry from him. Instead he put his tongue out at Kirsty, and flicked it back and forth across his teeth in a gesture of unrepentant lewdness. Then he came unsewn.

His limbs separated from his torso, and his head from his shoulders, in a welter of bone and heat.'" (Barker 47) Frank, the sexually depraved antagonist, is the primary site of body destruction, as he is torn apart by the Cenobites, made whole, and then torn asunder again. His body is a site of suffering, with his limbs torn apart and flesh carved open in his grotesque pursuit of pure ecstatic pleasure. Overt sexual depravity is another major theme in the novella, and the sexually disturbing images, although sporadically evident in the adaptation, were censored to remain marketable. In the novella, Frank's initial destruction by the Cenobites comes tied to sexuality; overwhelmed by his heightened senses and the memories of his ex-lovers stimulated as the creatures arrive, he tries to release the intensity by masturbating. This passage is removed from the film, and Frank's destruction becomes purely bodily. This is consistent with other sexual scenes that didn't make it into the film, showing Barker's desire to adhere to film restrictions and privilege a body horror spectacle over a complex, sexually charged narrative.

The film, released in 1987, was renamed *Hellraiser*. Similar to *The Thing*, this title change speaks of a creative desire to give the adaptation a distinct identity, despite this case study being the most faithful adaptation I've discussed here. Barker's felicity to his novella, while of course fulfilling the narrative he wished to communicate, also marks his awareness of the demands of a 1980's audience. As previously asserted, the 80s was the height of body horror fascination, and Barker's *Hellrasier* fed into the idea of films being "a spectacle offering not mere transcendence of the body, but transcendent through the body... a carnival of the perverse.'" (Badley 9) The pain and pleasure exhibited in the film truly transcends the body as it ripped apart and re-made. Badley discusses the idea of the Orpheus image as predominant in the horror genre. An ideology from Roman mythology, Orpheus' dismemberment is iconic for depicting the body made un-whole. Badley notes that "Barker's [Hellraiser] makes this point in the more generalised and visceral terms of the body self-articulating pieces.'" (14) In the film, the pieces of the body, rather than the body itself, become voyeurised, especially skin. Frank flaying his brother for his skin and close-ups of hooks and chains piercing and stretching Frank's skin at the beginning and end of the film mark the feature's most grotesque scenes. They are also exemplary of Stam's

theory on film's preoccupation with iconography; rather than ruminating on Frank's pain through words, hooks and chains cutting through flesh provide the audience with a 'real' pain they can pseudo-feel. Although the practical effects fake skin inauthentic and rubbery now, we still revel in the glorious image of this pain, or the illusion of it, and wince as if our own skin has been pierced. This theme of disembodiment is further carried out through Frank's scene of re-animation. After his brother Larry accidentally bleeds on the site where Frank was destroyed at the beginning, his body, piece by piece, close-up by close-up, becomes re-animated from the dark alternate dimension, reborn into our world a grotesque mess. This visualisation of Frank's reanimation is supported by Barker's camerawork, which disembodies Larry's injured hand and Frank's tortured limbs in carnal close-ups.

Another key change between novella and film was the fate of the puzzle box. In the novella, the Cenobites entrust its safety to protagonist Kirsty. Alternatively, in the film the Cenobites retrieve the box, returning it to the merchant who sold it to Frank at the film's beginning, who is then seen selling it to another victim. While ostensibly this leaves the ending open to sequels (a very important concern in the film industry), this choice is not necessarily money-driven. It also further reaffirms the narrative's masochist themes by reintroducing the puzzle box to a new willing sufferer. Briefel talks about the power of the horror film's monster committing masochistic acts, '‘it is a profoundly disturbing occurrence, the shock value of which emanates both from the unexpectedness of the monster hurting himself when his apparent role is to harm others, and from its challenge to conventional notions of monstrosity.’’ (18) Frank is undoubtedly masochistic, not by willingly destroying his own body, but by his depraved pursuits which led him to the puzzle box to begin with. The monstrous Cenobites are the highest disciples of sadomasochism, their own senses blurred between pleasure and pain to non-existence. Their willingness to hurt themselves, seen in their horrific appearance, and their lack of directly inflicting pain on most of the characters, is unusual for a body horror film. The film's ending, with another depraved man searching for sexual gratification through the puzzle box, re-confirms the males of Barker's world as weak pleasure seekers, susceptible to the destruction of their bodies by their own desires and perverted tastes.

Another change between novella and film to further this theme was changing protagonist Kirsty's relationship to Frank. In the novella, she was the love interest of Frank's brother Larry. In the film, this relationship is switched to niece-uncle. The sexual crime now becomes incest, furthering the theme of male depravity without any need for onscreen sexual action. These changes show a canny awareness by Barker of the film industry practice and the dialogue of adaptation. Additionally, the graphic bodily destruction, as in the other adaptations, becomes best expressed through the 'reality' of images; as such, *Hellraiser* is a more popular, well-known, and successful work of body horror than its source.

Based on these case studies, we see the dialogue of adaptation between novel and film as a process no longer restricted to a linear transference of information from words to images. Certainly not in the body horror genre. Indeed, these examples demonstrate that the body horror genre is dependent on the primacy of the image, the voyeurisation of it, to make its thematic components most effective and horrific. With clever production and thematic choices, adapting a novel at a certain time for a certain audience creates the greatest appeal possible for its adaptive film. By respecting their source narratives and prioritising set-piece images of bodily carnage, we see films that better fulfil the aims of the body horror genre than their literary sources. Noted scholar George Bluestone, in his 1968 work *Novels into Film*, said this;

'With the abandonment of language as its primary element, the film necessarily leaves behind those characteristic contents of thought which only language can approximate: tropes, dreams, memories, conceptual consciousness. In their stead, the film supplies endless spatial variations, photographic images of physical reality, and the principles of montage and editing. All these differences derive from the contrast between the novel as a conceptual and discursive form, and the film as a perceptual and presentational one.'" (VIII)

Films, as presentational, rely on the horrific majesty of the image to drive home the themes of the body horror genre. It is something that Cronenberg, Carpenter, and Barker do to great effect. All are aware of what the audience wants from a horror film and make production decisions to maximise their films' marketing appeal. This also makes them effective works within the body horror canon when compared with their sources and

other adaptations of the sources. My goal in this essay was to assess how adaptation theories were recognised by filmmakers and manipulated to appeal to a new audience. When directly compared to their literary source material, the 1980's films of *The Fly*, *The Thing*, and *Hellraiser* are more effective in embodying the traits of the body horror genre. This is due primarily to these films' focus on the horrific power of the image. Whether this can be extended to other body horror films and their sources would be a near-infinite study. However, what is certain is the power of spectacle is worthy in and of itself, and can be key to the central tenets of a given genre.

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