

Michel Foucault's "What is an Author?" and Adaptation

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'[The] only valid tribute to thought such as Nietzsche's is precisely to use it, to deform it, to make it groan and protest. ... [I]f the commentators say I am being unfaithful to Nietzsche that is of absolutely no interest.'
– Foucault, "Prison Talk"¹

The above quote might well apply to the following interpretation of Michel Foucault's 1969 essay, "What is an Author?",² but hopefully not too well. More importantly, in this context, it is emblematic of the role of authors in adaptation: it raises issues of authenticity and infidelity, use and misuse, deauthorialisation and reauthorialisation, and represents the same ambivalence characteristic of literary theory towards the author. Despite the highly textual nature, in the Barthesian idiom, of adapting novels into films, these issues have dogged adaptation scholars who have to contend with interrelated notions of fidelity and authorship. Foucault will be used in this essay to explain and evaluate key claims relating to the adapting of literary authors' works, the self-fashioning of the auteur movement in film criticism, and the status of authors in adaptation. It will be the contention of this essay that the question of authorship in adaptation should be understood in terms of what Foucault calls "founders of discursivity"—a problematic, but ultimately useful conception of the author and authorship. This will be done

by placing Foucault's discourse-based theses in dialogue with the textual approaches of poststructuralists such as Roland Barthes, and with the history of film's own theories of authorship that arose during the French auteur movement.

Since the 1990s, an increasing amount of scholarship in adaptation studies has been marked by re-examinations of structuralist and poststructuralist critiques that claimed to have "killed" the author. As Roland Barthes decentred the author, so too have these theories sought to question the means of the author's death. One common critique is that theories that have sought to kill the author have merely replaced this figure with evasive categories, such as language, semiotics or the catch-all concept of "text."³ Foucault made a similar point by way of what may be seen as a rejoinder to Jacques Derrida's notion of *écriture*: "In current usage ... the notion of writing seems to transpose the empirical characteristics of the author into a transcendental anonymity."⁴ Here, Foucault is critical of the substitution of the author with a more problematic concept. For poststructuralism, the deunification of the subject is equalled only by the arbitrariness attributed to language. For all its slipperiness, the "text" enjoys a critical purview far wider than the author. These revaluations have sought not to rehabilitate the author as he or she once was (the putative "author god"), but to point out that if authors are still to be found—or, more accurately, sought after—they are likely to be more complex than previously understood.

One scholar observes that "the study of adaptation is, at its broadest level of significance, a study of authorship in a state of historical transformation."⁵ In one sense this is true, particularly given the approaches to auteurism outlined below. Broader theories of semiotics, intertextuality and deauthorialisation are present in adaptation studies, but, like the adaptation itself, it is characterised by intermediality: as the adaptation is putatively caught between novel and film, so too is adaptation studies caught between the textual approaches of poststructuralism and postmodernism, and material and institutional concerns, be they medium-specific, legal rights, creative teams and/or studio executives. It is appropriate that a similar debate occurring in relation to the author be brought into relief within the context of adaptation studies; one that accommodates new approaches, re-examines old ones, and explores what authors do and can be made to do in adaptation. Antonio Calcagno says of "What is an Author?": "[r]ather than an absolute death or disappearance of the author, Foucault wishes to argue that there is an emergent shift in the way we view authors, but this shift does not preclude the notion of the author having certain content, power and critical functionality."⁶ Indeed, adaptation studies seems to be at a disadvantage when it comes to the question of authorship, but it is, in fact, an

interesting space for it. Narratives and characters share a dual citizenship between novel and film, but authors are usually denied such a wide-ranging purview. English Literature departments have traditionally maintained that things can nevertheless be attributed to the literary author. Such suppositions have gradually dissolved, so we can now ask: can the adaptation of an author's work be considered extrapersonal, yet still authorial?

The spectre of Barthes in author studies and the socialisation of the author

Barthes's two essays, "The Death of the Author"⁷ and "From Work to Text,"⁸ have left had an indelible mark on literary studies. For Barthes, the author was both material and auratic: the reader's horizon of interpretation was limited by the biographical substance of the author, which elevated the author to the privileged position of the "Author-God."⁹ The biographical positivism that Barthes attacks is not revelatory to a younger generation of scholars who encountered the author's death early on; a generation who knows more about Charles Dickens and Edgar Allan Poe from *The Simpsons*, and whose literary education, comprising William Shakespeare and Jane Austen, was invariably supplemented by adaptations (though, to be honest, we were always reminded of what we were really studying). The hermeneutic liberation Barthes' essay calls for was simply taken as a given, in tandem with the received wisdom of a tertiary education. By the same token, the heretical and deicidal analogues go unnoticed by those raised in a more relativist, pluralistic environment, however persuasive it had been for those who studied under the auspices of F.R. Leavis. It is true of this generation that the author was never a miserly withholder of interpretation but, in truth, a marketing category as much as anything else, emphatically material in the collectibility of merchandise and box sets, accessible via online forums on author-hosted websites and always available for comment in one way or another. This dehierarchisation and commodification of the author is accompanied by a diversification of authorial work, particularly via cinematic adaptation, which looms on both the author's and reader's horizons of expectations. This increased socialisation of the author also assumes the classificatory function Foucault remarked upon: "Such a name permits one to group together a certain number of texts, define them, differentiate them from and contrast them to others. In addition, it establishes a relationship among the texts."¹⁰ Inherent in Foucault's position here is an expansion of the notion of the text. While "text" has become so broad a category as to collect almost anything, this now includes artefacts not traditionally considered, including merchandise, and certainly adaptations. The

author and their name become a commodity; as one critic writes, "[t]he name of the author becomes a kind of brand name, a recognisable sign that the cultural commodity will be of a certain kind of quality."¹¹ The adaptation is often cynically viewed as the paragon of the commodification of authors and their novels, serving to indicate further the shifting space in which we perceive them, but also the way we use authors to establish, in Foucault's words, a "homogeneity, filiation, authentication of some texts by the use of others, reciprocal explication, or concomitant utilisation."¹²

For Barthes, removing the author had a transformative effect upon the text.¹³ However, this effect was more profound in its accommodation of the reader's interpretations. Removing the author privileged the reader, elevating them above the text. For Foucault, these claims of authorial death were uncompromising, so absolute that they precluded a broader examination of their effects. Calcagno points out that "[r]ather than an absolute death or disappearance of the author, Foucault wishes to argue that there is an emergent shift in the way we view authors, but this shift does not preclude the notion of the author having certain content, power and critical functionality."¹⁴ Carla Benedetti observes the reappraisal of the notion of the author or the conceptual field in which it operates: "Today, what reaches the reader by means of the intricate circuits of communications is not the text without author, but the author without text."¹⁵ It is clear that familiarity with the author's work is not a precondition of familiarity with the author—who among us has not had a "Proustian moment," yet never read *The Remembrance of Things Past*? While anecdotal, this serves to show that the category of author is up for reinterpretation. This author is thrown into discourses inclusive of advertising, journalism, criticism, and marketing. While all this certainly provides a highly mediated version or refraction of the author, it is one Foucault anticipated: "[T]he author does not precede the works; he is a certain functional principle by which, in our culture, one limits, excludes, and chooses; in short, by which one impedes the free circulation, the free manipulation, the free composition, decomposition, and recomposition of fiction."¹⁶ Thus the author is located at disparate levels: the utterance, article, aphorism, and (dis)approving remark. Authorship can be understood as an act of making oneself public, "and in that making public, one created oneself. One was authored by what others read."¹⁷ Adaptation is a different, yet analogous, mode of existence and dispersal. This indicates the highly constructed nature of the author's reception, no longer limited to fiction, which can be established further by examining how "What is an Author?" can be used to understand authors in adaptation.

Foucault's author in adaptation

Foucault's distinction between fiction and non-fiction poses an immediate problem when appropriating his essay to consider authorship in adaptation. On the one hand, he says that there are "transdiscursive" authors, "author[s] of a theory, tradition, or discipline in which other books and authors will in turn find a place."¹⁸ This attracts considerations of genre fiction, particularly in its multimedial state, such as the gothic tradition, science fiction, or horror. Each has epistemes to which Horace Walpole (although Foucault suggests Ann Radcliffe), Mary Shelley, and Poe can be respectively attributed. Thus Radcliffe

not only wrote *The Castles of Athlin and Dunbaye* and several other novels but also made possible the appearance of the Gothic horror novel [...] [I]n that respect, her author function exceeds her own work, in that her text opened the way for a certain number of resemblances and analogies which have their model or principle in her work.¹⁹

Foucault locates Radcliffe and the gothic genre at the level of the narrative trope, motif, or icon. While these are important considerations for adaptation, particularly for those of a certain genre, categories like the Victorian novel, in which Poe can also be located, and the interrelated *Bildungsroman*, are certainly more evocative of a certain *Zeitgeist* or historical moments in which multiple authors circulate.

Although Foucault's other category, "founders of discursivity," seems less flexible, it reflects the cultural and authorial vicissitudes characteristic of adaptation discourse. For Foucault, founders of discursivity are not to be confused with literary authors, who are "nothing more than the author of [their] own text." Foucault's founders of discursivity are Karl Marx and Sigmund Freud, who are "unique in that they are not just the authors of their own works. They have produced something else: the possibilities and the rules for the formation of other texts." By virtue of this, they create "signs, figures, relationships, and structures that could be reused by others."²⁰ But for adaptation studies, it is apt to locate the author per se as a founder of discursivity. This generously extends Foucault's thesis, making every adapted author a founder of discursivity, but it is not unworkable. Rhetorically, "signs," "figures," and "relationships" are decidedly more open categories than icons and tropes, but they also indicate a cultural plasticity in keeping with adaptation discourse. Importantly, considering adapted authors as founders of discursivity does not entail fidelity. In recognising that founders of discursivity make possible analogies (those perhaps typified by a "truthful" adaptation, which is neither possible, nor critically valid), Foucault notes that the differences made possible by a founder of discursivity

are of equal importance both to the author's position and that which they founded: "They have created a possibility for something other than their discourse, yet something belonging to what they founded."²¹ This reflects the changes that occur in adaptation, their consumption, and a broader category of the author. Taken literally, that "the initiator of a discursive practice does not participate in its later transformations"²² describes adaptation well enough. The authorial element can be attributed to them in one way or another, while being "heterogeneous to subsequent transformations," since it is open to "a certain number of possible applications."²³

Foucault's insistence that founders of discursivity entail a "return to the origin" is not an author-centric paroxysm. This "return," or rather, the deliberate recognition of an authored source in tandem with the modification is, in and of itself, a discursive practice, that "never stops modifying" the discourse itself.²⁴ to re-examine Marx is to modify Marxism, and vice versa. Here, the emphasis on the cultural construction of authors and the ability for texts, particularly adaptations, to preimagine and postimagine one another is in concert with adaptation. Importantly, Foucault's thesis describes these revised notions of authorship and, very much like in adaptation, accommodates notions of authors as transversal and interpenetrative—often as a dual presence. Thus an extension of Foucault's thesis serves to liberalise authorship and makes for an analogy for adaption. Consider Foucault's work on Friedrich Nietzsche, or Gilles Deleuze's work on Foucault. Both have had a transformative effect on the subjects in question, their respective "returns to the origin" in no way practices of fidelity, creating instead a "legacy of new readings that in time will be reread and reworked."²⁵ Much like in adaptation, authors are here in a state of simultaneity, "formed as well as being formative."²⁶ An emphasis on "formation" might seem a little ambiguous, but this can be clarified. Foucault suggests that it is not writing that has killed the author, as Barthes argued; rather, it was literature, as an assemblage of shifting cultural values and historical forces in which the author operated, and not the privileging of a semiotic or linguistic system. For Foucault, it was culture in general that killed the author, rather than writing specifically. This allows us to locate the author's disappearance as a historical moment resultant of discourse. While Barthes understood the relationship between author and text as an obstacle, Foucault thought it more an "explanatory problem"²⁷ and, given its shifting, but nevertheless identifiable, epistemological location, a problem likely to persist with changing demands.

Identifying the *auteur* in cinema

But how do directors make of themselves an *auteur*, or simply the most prominent author of a film, when adapting? Like the adaptation itself, caught between novel and film, the question of entitlement or ownership is indeterminate. Post-structuralist pedagogy implies the intertextual nature of art, and adaptation is an example of this. Authorship too, then, is in a heightened state of intermediacy in adaptation. To explain these changes, it will be useful to see how directors have approached adaptation and authorship, and to highlight where Foucault can elucidate this process. He suggests that a synthesis of the author can be arrived at when one focuses on how works are treated. In this sense, a novel becomes authored when we attribute to it an author, a process which arises via “the operations we force texts to undergo, the connections we make, the traits we establish as pertinent, the continuities we recognise, or the exclusions we practice. All these operations vary according to periods and types of discourse.”²⁸ What is interesting about the critical category of the *auteur* is that it arose precisely out of conditions similar to those described by Foucault. If the phrase “technologies of the self” did not carry numerous connotations, it would suitably describe both the self-fashioning of the *auteur*, and the implementation of the auteurist project.

Auteur theory sought to distinguish film’s unique properties from other art forms, and how they created specifically cinematic modes of expression. Besides the medium-specific differences and modes of production, one other thing was apparent: literature had authors. Contrariwise, connotations like “authenticity,” “creativity,” “ownership,” “origin,” and “originality” that freely orbited around and constituted the author before the interventions of Barthes and Derrida were absent in, or at least not attributable to, a particular film. Writing produced at the time, particularly in *Cahiers du Cinéma*, betrays an anxiety that the integrity of the medium and its practitioners had been, heretofore, uncertain. But there was also the belief that these opacities could be resolved. In the absence of a circumscribed author, Foucault suggests that one must play the “game of rediscovery.”²⁹ One such method was to create an equivalent figure, both in name and operation: if literature had authors, then cinema had *auteurs*. Transliterally, they mean the same thing, but in the Anglophone world the term “*auteur*” generated properties auratic enough to align it with a similar artistic standing while differentiating it well enough, and acquired some Continental allure in the process.

The conditions for the *auteur* and the need for its self-fashioning are embedded within film’s modes of production, which necessitate a dispersal of artistic and mercantile responsibilities. Actors too, with their own personalities and mercantile sway, can have an indelible stamp to the point that

one may be forgiven when they claim to have seen Audrey Hepburn's *Breakfast at Tiffany's*.³⁰ An author may write a generic story or experiment with meta-fiction, but is unlikely to be confused with another. Similarly, allegations of copyright infringement generally seek out the individual responsible.³¹ Anonymity, at least since the eighteenth century, has not been a problem for the author. But for the director to become an *auteur*, or, more so, the construction thereof, they must distinguish themselves from producers, studios, camera operators, screenwriters, or from the author of a novel they adapt. Alternatively, one can create a system in which one's authority is a given. Such was the case in auteur theory. Reflecting upon the movement, Peter Wollen observes that "auteur theory does not limit itself to acclaiming the director as the main author of a film. It implies an operation of decipherment; it reveals authors where none had been seen before."³² There is no spontaneous author, but rather, as Foucault noted, a "complex operation that constructs a certain being of reason we call "author,"³³ or in this case, *auteur*.

Writing and the *auteur*

Given Foucault's scepticism of the privileging of writing,³⁴ the relationship between writing and auteurship is interesting. Auteur theory "considered film a kind of extension of creative literary authorship that used the camera instead of the pen."³⁵ Alexandre Astruc exemplifies these sentiments:

The cinema is quite simply becoming a means of expression.... It is gradually becoming a language. By language I mean a form in which and by which an artist can express his thoughts.... That is why I would like to call this new age of cinema the age of the *caméra-stylo*.³⁶

In this passage parallels are consciously drawn between filmmaking and literature to capture the "essence" of writing, poaching its cultural capital and transposing it onto film. Yet Astruc's "camera pen" does not simply conflate "organic" writing with the photochemical, but searches for a critical equivalency, rather than a rhetorical parlance. Similar sentiments led François Truffaut to claim that "[i]t is ... only the smallest caprice on the part of the exegetists of our [cinematic] art that they believe to honour the cinema by using literary jargon."³⁷ While author and *auteur* mean the same thing, media set them apart. The emphasis on rhetoric and iconography—that of "penning" a film—can be understood as a declaration of artisanal equivalency. Of course, this personal relation to writing was contested by Barthes, who would have suggested that this omniscient and omnipresent

author imposes herself upon the reader. Barthes took revenge on this relationship of repression:

[W]riting is the destruction of every voice, of every point of origin. Writing is that neutral, composite, oblique space where our subject slips away, the negative where all identity is lost, starting with the very identity of the body writing.³⁸

In a theoretical context, it was ill-fated that the auteurist project went to great lengths to draw filmmaking into relation to writing. However, if writing deidentified the author, for the *auteurs*, film performed the opposite operation, both enlivening and identifying them via style. Thus Robert Stam says of Truffaut's approach: "film would resemble the person who made it, not so much through autobiographical content but rather through the style, which impregnates the film with the personality of its own director."³⁹ Additionally, this emphasis on style made the *auteur* a decipherable presence amongst other forces, be they creative (lighting, sound, costume) or those usually considered to be bereft of artistry (producers, investors, censors): "Of course, the director does not have full control over his work; this explains why the auteur theory involves a kind of decipherment, decryptment."⁴⁰ So, while semiotic theory privileged the text over the author and, in doing so, "killed" the author, the heavily theorised medium specificity of the auteur theory precluded the author, but enabled the *auteur*. There is an appealing contrast here that relates to Foucault and adaptation: "The problem is both theoretical and technical."⁴¹ There is no transferral of authorial ownership, rather simply the possibility or indeed inevitability of an *auteur* who usurps no one. This brings into relief Foucault's objection to the privileging of writing, and the fashioning of authors, although in this case it is a self-fashioning: authors function within the circumscribed limits of a "system that encompasses, determines, and articulates the universe of discourses,"⁴² the system here being the *politique des auteurs*.

Authoring an adaptation

Stam observes of this period that "[t]he tradition of quality, for Truffaut, reduced filmmaking to the mere translation of a pre-existing screenplay, when it should be seen as an open-ended adventure in creative *mise-en-scène*."⁴³ Clearly, the *auteurs* wanted it both ways: the rigidity of the screenplay, analogous to what Barthes would call the authored "work," limits readerly freedom. A more liquescent approach to adapting places the impetus on a reader-based (or "writerly," as Barthes would suggest in *S/Z*⁴⁴) play of interpretations. Yet these too pass through the sieve of *au-*

teurship, and are congruous with Foucault's aforementioned conceptions of the author as "functional principle." The likely result, both in theory and practice, is a circumscribing of the adaptation in a manner deemed unacceptable to that of novels and screenplays. The purview of the *auteur* when adapting was thus rather final. Truffaut's recapitulation of novelist Jean Giraudoux's aphorism, "There are no works, there are only auteurs,"⁴⁵ was likely a conscious re-appropriation of the status of the author into the realm of the *auteur*.

Adaptations were a key feature of *auteurist* discourse. While Jean-Luc Godard's cry "No more stories!" seems to place them firmly out of the picture, the movement adopted a philosophical approach to adaptation that distinguished itself from previous methods.⁴⁶ The way one adapted was a conditioning factor in the self-fashioning of the *auteur* and characterised their approach in general. The "tradition of quality,"⁴⁷ which was, for Truffaut, comprised of "faithful" adaptations of classic literature, was contrasted to an incredulity towards such a subservient mode of adaptation. Truffaut's *auteurism* was twinned with an approach to adaptation that did not try to reproduce in film the the style or "voice" of the author. He perceived sophistry at work: "In adaptation there exist filmable scenes and unfilmable scenes, and ... instead of omitting the latter (as was done not so long ago) it is necessary to invent equivalent scenes, that is to say, scenes as the novel's author would have written them for the cinema."⁴⁸ Truffaut denounced this directorial reticence, and suggested that assuming the persona of one whose work was being adapted was undesirable, and proclaimed that there were no "unfilmable scenes."⁴⁹ But this was in no way a cry for fidelity, a sentiment that was echoed by Stanley Kubrick outside the French collective: "If it can be written, or thought, it can be filmed."⁵⁰ In this context, a story had to change authorial hands when adapted: "Talent ... is not a function of fidelity, but I consider an adaptation of value only when written by a man of the cinema. [Screenwriters] [Jean] Aurenche and [Pierre] Bost are essentially literary men and I reproach them here for being contemptuous of the cinema by underestimating it."⁵¹ Thus an adaptation was written by a self-fashioned *auteur* who considered himself to be reauthorialising the novel. In spite of this ambivalence towards literature and authors, what was required and created were "'*auteurist*' adaptations."⁵²

The self-conscious application and instantiation of the *auteur* was not immune to criticism, but it enjoyed considerable popularity amongst American critics, particularly following Andrew Sarris's reformulation of the *politique des auteurs* as the "*auteur theory*."⁵³ Although it retains some currency amongst cinephiles, it barely had academic traction before structuralist theory decentred it altogether. It would not have been unreasonable for

practitioners and sympathisers alike to feel a little short-changed. Foucault observes that the author had enjoyed a lengthy acculturation as a figure of authenticity and immortality for the Ancient Greeks, and guaranteed financial and cultural posterity by eighteenth-century copyright legislation.⁵⁴ Burke says of Barthes that “[h]e must create a king worthy of killing,”⁵⁵ but his task was made easier and perhaps seemed timely, given the weight of literary history, the (then more so than today) Catholic nature of France, and the rigmarole of post-1968 university politics. The “notion of ‘author,’” as opposed to the author, constitutes, for Foucault, a “privileged moment of individualisation” in history,⁵⁶ but in the *auteur* theory we have a different history. Cinema had undergone a rapid technologisation by this time. André Bazin said that “[i]t may be reckoned that the past 20 years of the cinema will be reckoned in its overall history as the equivalent of five centuries in literature.”⁵⁷ That film’s own theory of authorship coincided with structuralist and semiotic criticism can thus be seen as the moment that cinema and its orbiting theories caught up to the long history of literature.

Bazin was a key figure of the *auteurist* movement and of the early theorisation of cinema, and was sensitive to the role of the *auteur* in adaptation. He wrote that “[t]he more important and decisive the literary qualities of the work, the more the adaptation disturbs the equilibrium, the more it needs a creative talent to reconstruct it on a new equilibrium not indeed identical with, but the equivalent of, the old one.”⁵⁸ Here we see claims pertinent to the artistic and cultural disruption prompted by adaptation. The difference in media precludes a strict “matching”—not a source of anxiety itself—but can be mitigated by a conscientious desire to find and develop an equivalent aesthetic experience. The role of the novel’s author, however, is not apparent. Rather, the qualities of the novel are foregrounded insofar as they require the intervention of a bespoke authorial figure. Here the *auteur* is a conscientious individual, “a creative talent,” who dutifully “reconstructs” this experience. The emphases on the aesthetic and narrative qualities of the novel are contingent upon the person adapting. This suggests an independence from the literary material twinned with a transferral of authorial responsibility, from authorless to authored.

Naming the adapted author

Foucault’s constructed author has an identifiable, axial relationship with their work. The relationship is a transversal one that does not preclude the multimedial. Foucault limits himself to works that can be “legitimately attributed”⁵⁹ to an author, and from this nodal point pursues the cultural dissemination of that author’s identity, however loosely unified, resulting in the

plurality of egos. However, things become more uncertain in adaptation when a second author figure is introduced. While this was obviously not much of a consideration for the *auteurs*, adaptation often places authors in direct relation with what is being adapted. When an author denounces a film or insists they not be credited, they nevertheless assume a position of authority—in which one has the power of refusal of payment, acknowledgment, or consultation. Alan Moore, whose graphic novels *V for Vendetta*, *From Hell*, *The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen* and *Watchmen* have all been adapted into films in the last ten years, assumed such a role. All four films have generated millions at the box office, but have also seen an unprecedented interest in his work.⁶⁰

This calls into question the author's name, a key factor of the functioning of authors for Foucault. The author is more than a name, yet is in many ways reducible to it. In adaptation, these anxieties are heightened. There is tension over who takes credit and, perhaps more importantly, who readers and filmgoers give credit to. Considering the extensive adaptation of Dickens's novels by the BBC, the question of ownership or authorship is often contingent upon their reception. Most, like many adaptations, are marketed as "Charles Dickens's ...," likely preceded by "BBC presents...." If the adaptation is well received the director likely goes unnoticed, with accolades going primarily to the deceased author and, perhaps as a secondary consideration, the production values of the BBC and the actors. It may be the case that the director is called into question only when the adaptation is poorly received. In such a case, Dickens is spared criticism. He, like his novel, assumes a perfect state. Indeed, it hardly matters if the novel has been read or not: the shabbiness of the adaptation testifies to the quality of his novel.

And yet Dickens is undeniably called upon when his novels are adapted. Foucault suggests that "one cannot turn a proper name into a pure and simple reference."⁶¹ Superficially, this is what adaptation is perceived to do. However, Foucault notes that the author's name is made to evoke "definite descriptions,"⁶² and this entails a diversification of those descriptions. It is clear, both in general cultural dissemination and in adaptation specifically, that the author's name does not function as a simple citation but is iterable across media in ways far removed from authorial intent and notions of fidelity. Foucault notes that "all discourses endowed with the author function possess this plurality of the self":⁶³ the term "author" "does not refer purely and simply to a real individual, since it can give rise simultaneously to several selves, to several subjects—[it is a] position that can be occupied by different classes of individuals."⁶⁴ The name circumvents the individual, who is not "located in the fiction of the work; rather, it is located

in the break that founds a certain discursive construct and its very particular mode of being.⁶⁵ The process of adaptation and the insertion of a new authorial figure exemplify a “break” essential to the functioning of authors. This mode of plurality within discourse is essential for Foucault’s author-function. While composed of shifting instances that point to an author, the concept of author need not refer to an individual. This accommodates both a divided “adapted” author and an “adapting” *auteur*/director, and the possibility of authorship in a plural, equipollent state. Hence, we can broaden the category of the adapted author: the adapted Dickens, Dickens as seen by film, and Dickens in his plural, authorial state.

This much can be said of any author whose work has been adapted, drawing attention to the multiple states of authorship an author may be made to inhabit, contingent upon the process of acculturation and commodification in adaptation. Foucault says that “if we proved that Shakespeare did not write those sonnets which pass for his, that would constitute a significant change and affect the manner in which the author’s name functions.”⁶⁶ By the same token, the functioning of Shakespeare’s name would alter considerably were we to discover that he wrote numerous plays once thought to be written by others. From this we infer that the author’s name and its discursive, operational value is subject to elevation, subtraction, and revaluation. The persuasiveness of the director’s name, as codified by the *auteur*, was one of the things that attracted criticism: any number of poor films could be legitimated once attributed to an author. Hence Bazin warned against an “aesthetic personality cult,”⁶⁷ and Andrew Sarris speculated that the director’s name, when it denoted an *auteur*, was overly prescriptive: “Presumably, we can all go home as soon as the directorial signature is flashed on the screen.”⁶⁸

Thomas Leitch explores authorship in adaptation with a focus on how works become acculturated to directors from an industrial and cultural perspective. With the notable exception of Daphne du Maurier’s *Rebecca*,⁶⁹ Alfred Hitchcock adapted little-known novels that had not brought their authors widespread attention. Indeed, his declaration that authors could only benefit from having their work adapted may have been legitimate, safe in the knowledge that his pre-eminence would likely thwart a resurgence in the literary author’s claim to ownership. Hitchcock would take little-known titles that could more than accommodate his authorial presence, but would rather be absorbed by it, refusing works like Fyodor Dostoyevsky’s *Crime and Punishment*, “whose authorship would leave no room for his own.”⁷⁰ Hitchcock projected an “adapter/*auteur*” “public persona capable of being turned into an appealing and recognisable trademark.”⁷¹ By the same token, the “Hitchcock thriller” conflates product and artist, and his unmistakable

ble silhouette, a staple on *Alfred Hitchcock Presents*, became as identifiable as his name. His cameo appearances in his films often meant that viewers made sport of seeking him out. Hence Hitchcock became an inter-relational presence, authorialising by being embedded within the narrative and an identifiable and attributable presence for marketing purposes. Kubrick projected something similar, the enigmatic image of the "adapter/auteur as solitary artist,"⁷² but in another sense can be seen to have laudably transgressed the limits of adaptation with his use of "unadaptable" material, like Anthony Burgess's *A Clockwork Orange*, which is written in an obscure argot, Nadsat.⁷³ Indeed Burgess, who wrote over thirty novels, predicted it would be his fate to be remembered as the author who inspired Kubrick's film.⁷⁴ The author's name, as used in adaptation, has connotations both beneficial and detrimental, since the author's association with the adaptation may serve either to add to their posterity or to detract from it. As adaptations are often presented as extensions of their novels' authors, the author's name is in a constant state of revision. As exemplified by Hitchcock's approach to adaptation, the author's name was often present, yet intentionally overshadowed by the self-fashioning of a more authoritative presence.

"What does it matter who is speaking?"⁷⁵

For Foucault, the author can be understood as a function of their work. Broadening the scope, the author increasingly becomes a "function of artistic communication,"⁷⁶ and adaptation serves to bring into relief the communication and dispersal of authors. The author or director comes to be seen as processional, accumulative, and dispersed across media in ways resisted by anti-author scholarship and adaptation studies. Attuning ourselves to authors who are adapted and who adapt permits us to elucidate a specific, yet variegated "typology of discourse" attuned to the means by which authors may be said to exist: through "the modalities of circulation, valorisation, attribution, and appropriation."⁷⁷ The heterogeneous relationship that Foucault's founders of discursivity have with the dissemination of their work accommodates changes and revaluations made by adaptors, including them in the discourse itself. Acknowledging this sheds new light on the history of the French auteurist movement, bringing their elided authorial subjects back into a conversational relationship. This dovetails with Jacob Fisher's appraisal of Foucault's essay: "the founding of a discursivity should be characterised in terms of "forgetting" that necessitates a return, and vice versa. With the founding of discursivity, we are given a constitutive play of forgetting and return."⁷⁸ Hence, Foucault's "author function does not arise

spontaneously by attributing a work to a specific author”; rather, it is “dependent on recognition, use of the author’s work, and the reception and dissemination of work.”⁷⁹ Indeed, the overwhelming impression one receives from Foucault is that authors become increasingly defined by self-fashioning and by the operations imposed upon them. Be it an identity or a concept, the author “arises from the use to which we put the respective texts.”⁸⁰ Calcagno suggests that we attribute certain modes of discourse to the author, such as “poet” or “philosopher.”⁸¹ To this we can add “adapted” or “adapting” to reflect the commonplace functions that usually remain unacknowledged.

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NOTES

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² Michel Foucault, “What is an Author?,” trans. Josué V. Harari, in *Aesthetics, Method, and Epistemology*, ed. James D. Faubion (New York: The New Press, 1994): 205–21.

³ C. Lehmann, *Shakespeare Remains: Theatre to Film, Early Modern to Postmodern* (London: Cornell University Press, 2001), 4–8; and Mireia Aragay, ed., *Books in Motion: Adaptation, Intertextuality, Authorship* (New York, Rodopi, 2005), 28.

⁴ Foucault, “What is an Author?,” 208.

⁵ Erica Sheen, “Introduction,” in *The Classic Novel: From Page to Screen*, ed. R. Giddings and E. Sheen (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), 4.

⁶ Antonio Calcagno, “Foucault and Derrida: The Question of Empowering and Disempowering the Author,” *Hum Stud* 32 (2009): 37–8.

⁷ Roland Barthes, “The Death of the Author,” in *Oeuvres complètes*, Tome 2, 1966–1973, Éditions du Seuil, 1994, reprinted in *The Book History Reader*, ed. David Finklestein and Alistair McCleery (Routledge: London, 2002/2006): 277–80.

⁸ Roland Barthes, “From Work to Text,” in *The Cultural Studies Reader*, ed. Simon During (London: Routledge, 2007), 81–7.

⁹ Barthes, “The Death of the Author,” 279.

¹⁰ Foucault, “What is an Author?,” 210.

¹¹ Mark Rose, *Authors and Owners: The Invention of Copyright* (Cambridge: Mass, 1993), 1–2, quoted in Robert J. Griffith, “Anonymity and Authorship,” *New Literary History* 30, no. 4 (1999): 879.

- ¹² Foucault, "What is an Author?," 211.
- ¹³ Barthes, "The Death of the Author," 278.
- ¹⁴ Calcagno, "Foucault and Derrida," 37–8.
- ¹⁵ Carla Benedetti, *The Empty Cage: Inquiry into the Mysterious Disappearance of the Author*, trans. William J. Hartley (London: Cornell University Press, 1999/2005), 3. See also Roland Barthes "The Writer on Holiday," in *Mythologies*, trans. Annette Lavers (London: Paladin, 1957/1987), [page numbers!].
- ¹⁶ Foucault, "What is an Author?," 221.
- ¹⁷ Calcagno, "Foucault and Derrida," 42.
- ¹⁸ Foucault, "What is an Author?," 217.
- ¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 217.
- ²⁰ *Ibid.*, 217.
- ²¹ *Ibid.*, 218.
- ²² *Ibid.*, 219.
- ²³ *Ibid.*, 219.
- ²⁴ *Ibid.*, 219.
- ²⁵ Calcagno, "Foucault and Derrida," 48.
- ²⁶ *Ibid.*, 46.
- ²⁷ Adrian Wilson, "Foucault on the 'Question of the Author;: A Critical Exegesis," *The Modern Language Review* 99, no. 2 (2004): 350.
- ²⁸ Foucault, "What is an Author?," 213–14.
- ²⁹ *Ibid.*, 213.
- ³⁰ Truman Capote, *Breakfast at Tiffany's* (Melbourne, Penguin Books, 1958/1961); Blake Edwards (dir.), *Breakfast at Tiffany's* (Paramount Pictures, 1961).
- ³¹ Rose, *Authors and Owners*, 879.
- ³² Peter Wollen, "The Auteur Theory" (excerpt), in *Auteurs and authorship: A Film Reader*, ed. Barry Keith Grant (Oxford, Blackwell Publishing, 2008), 56.
- ³³ Foucault, "What is an Author?," 213.
- ³⁴ *Ibid.*, 208.
- ³⁵ Jack Boozer, *Authorship in Film Adaptation* (Austin: University of Texas, 2008), 14.
- ³⁶ Alexandre Astruc, "The Birth of a New Avant-Garde: La caméra-stylo," trans. Peter Graham, in *The New Wave*, ed. James Monaco (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976), 5.
- ³⁷ François Truffaut, "A Certain Tendency of the French Cinema," in *Cahiers du Cinéma* in English 1. Originally published in *Cahiers du Cinéma* 31 (1954), reprinted in Grant, *Auteurs and authorship: A Film Reader*, 13.
- ³⁸ Barthes, "The Death of the Author," 277.
- ³⁹ Robert Stam, *Film Theory: An Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), 84.

- ⁴⁰ Wollen, "The Auteur Theory," 63.
- ⁴¹ Foucault, "What is an Author?," 207.
- ⁴² *Ibid.*, 216.
- ⁴³ Stam, *Film Theory*, 84.
- ⁴⁴ Roland Barthes, *S/Z*, tTrans. Richard Millner (New York: The Noonday Press, 1974).
- ⁴⁵ André Bazin, "*De la politique des auteurs*," trans. Peter Graham, in Grant, *Auteurs and authorship: A Film Reader*, 20; italics in original.
- ⁴⁶ Ghislaine Gélain, "The Plight of Film Adaptation in France: Toward Dialogic Process in the *Auteur* Film," in *Film and Literature: A Comparative Approach to Adaptation*, ed. Wendell Aycock and Michael Schoenecke (Texas: Texas Tech University Press, 1988), 135–6.
- ⁴⁷ Truffaut, "A Certain Tendency," 9–10.
- ⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 10.
- ⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 11.
- ⁵⁰ Jerome Agel, *The Making of Kubrick's 2001* (New York: New American, 1970), 11.
- ⁵¹ Truffaut, "A Certain Tendency," 12; italics original.
- ⁵² Boozer, *Authorship*, 14. See François Truffaut (dir.), *Jules and Jim* (Janus Films, 1962), an adaptation of Henri-Pierre Roché's novel of the same name, trans. Patrick Evans (London Marion Boyards, 1953/2000); and François Truffaut (dir.), *Fahrenheit 451* (Universal Pictures, 1966), an adaptation of Ray Bradbury's novel of the same name (London: Harper Collins, 1954/2004).
- ⁵³ See Pam Cook, "Authorship and Cinema Introduction," and "*Auteurs and metteurs en scène*," in *The Cinema Book*, ed. Pam Cook (London: British Film Institute, 2007), 387–9 and 398–402.
- ⁵⁴ Foucault, "What is an Author?," 206.
- ⁵⁵ Burke, *The Death and Return of the Author*, 26.
- ⁵⁶ Foucault, "What is an Author?," 205.
- ⁵⁷ André Bazin, "In Defence of Mixed Cinema," in *What is Cinema? Vol. 1*, trans. Hugh Gray (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1967/2005), 56.
- ⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 56.
- ⁵⁹ Foucault, "What is an Author?," 216.
- ⁶⁰ Albert & Allen Hughes (dir.), *From Hell* (20th Century Fox, 2001); James McTeigne (dir.), *V for Vendetta* (Warner Brothers, 2006); Alan Moore, *V for Vendetta* (Vertigo, 1982–1989); *Watchmen* (DC Comics, 1986–1987); *From Hell* (Top Shelf Productions, 1991–1996); *The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen* (DC Comics, 1999–2007); Stephen Norrington (dir.), *The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen* (20th Century Fox, 2003); Zack Snyder (dir.), *Watchmen* (Warner Brothers, 2009).
- ⁶¹ Foucault, "What is an Author?," 209.

- ⁶² Ibid., 209.
- ⁶³ Ibid., 215.
- ⁶⁴ Ibid., 216.
- ⁶⁵ Ibid., 211.
- ⁶⁶ Ibid., 210.
- ⁶⁷ Bazin, "De la politique des auteurs," 26.
- ⁶⁸ Andrew Sarris, "Notes on the Auteur Theory in 1962," in Grant, *Auteurs and authorship: A Film Reader*, 35.
- ⁶⁹ Daphne du Maurier, *Rebecca* (New York, Doubleday, 1938/1968); Alfred Hitchcock (dir.), *Rebecca* (United Artists, 1940).
- ⁷⁰ Thomas Leitch, "The Adapter as Auteur: Hitchcock, Kubrick, Disney," in *Books in Motion: Adaptation, Intertextuality, Authorship*, ed. Mireia Aragay (New York: Rodopi, 2005), 110 and 116.
- ⁷¹ Ibid., 105.
- ⁷² Ibid., 116.
- ⁷³ Anthony Burgess, *A Clockwork Orange* (Penguin: Victoria, 1962/2000). See Sean McQueen, "Adapting to Language: Anthony Burgess's and Stanley Kubrick's *A Clockwork Orange*," *Science Fiction Film and Television* 5, no. 2 (2012): 221–41.
- ⁷⁴ Blake Morrison, "Introduction," in Anthony Burgess, *A Clockwork Orange* (Victoria: Penguin, 1962/2000), vii.
- ⁷⁵ Foucault, "What is an Author?," 205.
- ⁷⁶ Benedetti, *The Empty Cage*, 60-61; italics in original.
- ⁷⁷ Ibid., 70-71.
- ⁷⁸ Jacob S. Fisher, "What is an Oeuvre? Foucault and Literature," *Configurations* 7, no. 2 (1999): 285.
- ⁷⁹ Ibid., 40.
- ⁸⁰ Wilson, "Question of the Author," 351.
- ⁸¹ Calcagno, "Foucault and Derrida," 40.