The Third Work: A Critical Rewriting of André Bazin

by

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This is to certify that the accompanying thesis by Birgitta L. Gerlach has been accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for graduation with Honors in German Studies.

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Introduction

Film and Adaptation History

The history of the adapted film has been inextricably tied up with the history of cinema as a whole. As soon as film's narrative capabilities were recognized, filmmakers drew inspiration from pre-existing stories, often in the form of literary texts. This move was also intended to demonstrate cinema's artistic potential to its naysayers, as "[e]arly in its history, cinema, possibly due to its creation by production teams … and to its reliance on technology, was regarded by many as an industry, not as an art form, and therefore considered a low form of entertainment, not to be compared in any way with arts such as painting or literature" (Cartmell and Whelehan 28). Because "Filmkunst … die einzige [Kunst ist], die im kapitalistischen Zeitalter enstanden ist" (Balázs 88), it was associated with capitalism and believed to have only financial incentives, which hindered the recognition of its artistic integrity. In order to free film from these pervading perspectives, filmmakers specifically adapted classic literary texts, hoping to use these texts and their prestige to illustrate that cinema was not simply low-brow entertainment for the unintellectual masses but could contribute to intellectual discourses.

Unfortunately, this choice was, in many ways, a double-edged sword. Adapting famous literary works may have proved film's high-art potential, but using such highly-esteemed texts also opened these films up to significant criticism. In fact, these early adaptations were met with criticism from the literary world and, surprisingly, the cinematic world alike. Members of the cinema industry "wanted film to have an identity all of its own" (Cartmell and Whelehan 33) and thus rejected adaptations, which they

argued blurred distinctions between literature and film. On the other hand, literary figures scorned adaptation as a failure to depict a text on screen: a faulty version which lacked the nuance and careful craftsmanship of the original text. The famous author Virginia Woolf was one of these critics, writing of film adaptation in 1926: "So we lurch and lumber through the most famous novels of the world. So we spell them out in words of one syllable written, too, in the scrawl of an illiterate schoolboy" (Woolf 3). This simple yet scathing review exemplifies common attitudes about famous literary works being adapted into films, an attitude dominated by the film's obligation to "live up to" the original text; this is known as an emphasis on the film's "fidelity."

Problems with Fidelity

Unfortunately, the fixation on fidelity has greatly restricted discussions of film adaptations. In particular, preoccupation with fidelity can cause critics to censure films purely for deviating from the source text without examining how these deviations function. Admittedly, if an adapted film is poor, it is reasonable to criticize or perhaps even "condemn [it], provided one does not confuse this mediocrity with the very principle of cinematic adaptation…" (Bazin 24-25). Here, André Bazin, a critic of fidelity theory, points out the importance of distinguishing between judging an individual adaptation and judging the entire discipline. However, many critics failed to recognize this distinction and denounced the entire endeavor based on the failings of singular attempts at film adaptation. Such attitudes were also loaded with elitist attitudes about high and low brow culture, whether consciously or not. Similar to the invention of the radio, film adaptations brought "high-brow" literary classics to the "low-brow" masses.

The higher classes, who had previously been the largely exclusive readers of these esteemed texts, opposed the ease with which viewers could now consume these texts in a new, accessible format. This attitude stemmed from a "clichéd bias according to which culture is inseparable from intellectual effort [and which] springs from a bourgeois, intellectualist reflex" (Bazin 22). Further, film was perceived as a threat to the upper classes, as these adaptations represented the first time that high "Kultur … nicht Monopol der herrschenden Klassen geblieben [war]" (Balázs 90). Despite this early resistance, today film has established its validity as an art form and secured recognition of its intellectual worth and formal capabilities. Unfortunately, fidelity still afflicts adapted films, particularly by popular audiences: "Fidelity remains at the fringes of the study of adaptations, but it dominates the popular reviews and fan sites alike" (Cartmell and Whelehan 20-21). Given this ubiquity, adaptation studies is vital in combating fidelity's domination of film adaptation discussions.

As a field, adaptation studies attempts to move beyond fidelity or faithfulness to an "original" source to consider the adapted film more holistically, but even within the discipline, this has been hard to achieve. This is in large part because "few of the first generation of [film] scholars … had received formal training in film studies themselves. Most of them came from English departments…" (Leitch 3) and accordingly held deep-set biases towards literature. For this reason, they still viewed the film as a secondary entity wholly contingent on, and thus able to be judged by, the source text. Early studies of adaptation consciously tried to refrain from judgments based on fidelity, but often still subtly adhered to this notion. The first steps away from fidelity occurred with the publication of what is widely regarded as the first academic study of film adaptation:

George Bluestone's 1957 book, *Novels into Film*. This landmark text opens by deconstructing fidelity's desirability; Bluestone argues that fidelity is impossible to achieve, because "changes are *inevitable* the moment one abandons the linguistic for the visual medium" (Bluestone 5). Although later academics have since critiqued aspects of Bluestone's approach, the accuracy of this statement has been upheld and remains a central tenet of the discipline. For example, Robert Stam tellingly begins his 2005 book on adaptation with the exact same point, writing, "an adaptation is **automatically** different and original due to the change of medium" (Stam 3-4). This is highly relevant to my source texts, *Er ist Wieder Da* and the *Duineser Elegien*, which are written in the first person; this literary technique cannot be perfectly translated to the film medium, at least without redundantly narrating action that audiences can see for themselves, and therefore must be altered. Given these formal differences, a film that attempts to be as similar to the original as possible would neglect the elements that make film a unique medium, like sound and visuals. For this reason, fidelity is actually "undesirable" (Stam 4). Essentially, fidelity as a methodological basis is so restrictive that it hinders productive examinations of adapted films and has consequently fallen out of fashion within film studies.

With fidelity thus rejected as a productive metric by which to examine film adaptations, academics have turned to a variety of other theoretical approaches in its place. Bluestone's aforementioned text focused on formal differences between the novel as a textual and the film as a visual medium. Other academics choose to emphasize sociological or historical approaches, like Stam, who examines "the historicity of forms themselves [and how] violations of aesthetic norms resonate with the undermining of social norms" (Stam 18) or Dudley Andrew, who argues that narratives must be

considered in conjunction with their social context because of narrative's dependence on connotation. There remain many other theoretical frameworks and the field is in constant flux; as Cartmell and Whelehan write, "the field itself is changing rapidly to the point that some areas of primary concern [in our text] would not have had currency in Bluestone's time" (Cartmell and Whelehan 11), referring to their analysis of inter-, para- and hyper-textuality. Of these many theories and methodologies, my thesis will investigate one of André Bazin, a deeply influential French film critic from the 20th century.

André Bazin: Adaptation, or the Cinema as Digest

In his landmark essay, *Adaptation, or the Cinema as Digest*, André Bazin tackles the issue of fidelity and argues for cinema's artistic validity. His most intriguing point proposes that in the future, adaptations and their source texts will collectively be viewed as merely separate manifestations of a single work. He uses the example of Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men*: "the (literary?) critic of the year 2050 would find not a novel out of which a play and 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 only an ideal point at the top of this figure, which itself is an ideal construct" (Bazin 26). Here, Bazin outlines a new theory of adaptation that deconstructs dominant norms. First, it eliminates the hierarchy between the source text and its adaptations. Second, by suggesting the "work" is immaterial, his theory rejects common conceptions of a work as a single, physical entity. Third, as the work is no longer contained within one physical existence, there can be no singular author. In these ways,

Bazin's pyramidally-structured theory deconstructs common conceptions of both the "work" and "authorship," but also holds broader implications for the study of adaptation.

My thesis uses this framework to analyze two adaptations, but ultimately modifies Bazin's theory to address his problematic commitment to fidelity. For Bazin's theory is still subtly rooted in the notion of fidelity, restricting its usefulness as an analytic method. This is most immediately evident in the article's title: *Adaptation, or the Cinema as Digest*. Bazin explains how the term "digest" describes film adaptation as "literature that has been made more accessible through cinematic adaptation" (Bazin 26). While Bazin is satisfied with the term, it is unclear why. His claim reveals his belief that a film adaptation is essentially still the source text, just a simplified version made purely in order to be "better tolerated by the consumer's mind" (Bazin 26). While this claim describes one potential use of film adaptation, it needlessly restricts the entire discipline to one narrow definition and purpose, foreclosing other potential metrics with which to examine film adaptations. (Not to mention, it problematically plays into tropes of adapted films being intellectually lesser than their textual counterparts— the very misconception Bazin argues against shortly before.) Remarks about the "spirit" of certain films being "betrayed" (Bazin 25) and Bazin's simplistic suggestion that cinematic adaptation's goal is to "simplify and condense" the source text (Bazin 25) further imply that adaptations exist to convey some aspect of the original text and must do so faithfully— whatever that might mean. These subtle comments definitively reveal Bazin's underlying dependence on fidelity.

This dependence shapes Bazin's larger theoretical framework. Fidelity focuses on how the film conforms to the source text— that is, the similarities between them.

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Accordingly, Bazin emphasizes what adaptations share with the source text. This focus on similarity suggests the ideal work at the pyramid's peak is the same work reflected in each of its physical manifestations, which therefore *only* differ in their respective mediums. However, as fidelity forecloses other possible ways of investigating film adaptations, a theory underpinned by fidelity is certain to be similarly restrictive.

Modification of Bazin

I suggest Bazin's theory would be improved if one rather views and understands each individual text as its own unique work. By asserting each text is its own individual entity, we eliminate the need to only consider the similarities between the adaptation and the source text. Instead, we can investigate each work holistically, which still allows us to identify similarities existing between the works, but also the differences that make each work unique. This allows us to consider the interaction between the works more deeply than merely finding similarities. Instead we might ask how these works, and their respective differences, engage and interplay with each other. I maintain Bazin's pyramidal structure, but instead of identifying a unifying work at the pyramid's top, I suggest we might find an entirely new, third work. This third, ideal work does not exist in the individual works themselves, but *only* arise in the engagement and intersections *between* these works. In this way, I argue that Bazin's theory, while groundbreaking for its time, needs modifications to 1. eliminate its rootedness in fidelity theory and 2. offer a more complex methodology capable of identifying and analyzing more nuanced relationships between texts to divulge an ideal work that would otherwise go unseen.

This new methodology is helped by the work of Andrew Leitch. Like many early film academics, Leitch was trained in literary studies simply because film studies did not yet exist and his argument stems from a critical analysis of these fields. Leitch notes a certain hypocrisy within literary studies. Leitch argues that literature studies undervalue adaptations because of a bias towards the act of reading, rather than writing or responding to texts. At the same time, however, literature studies emphasizes reading beyond a surface level— that is, critical reading, which Leitch argues is "already tantamount to a rewriting of the text. … it aims at active interpretation and creation rather than neutrally receptive understanding" (Leitch 15-16). He argues that adaptations should be considered as a form of rewriting and notes that this rewriting can include substantial variations from the source text. This is largely established through his opposition to other schools of thought. He writes: "Taking fidelity as the decisive criterion of an adaptation's value is tantamount to insisting that it do the same job as its source text without going outside the lines that text has established…", "Any … novel must be better than the additions, subtractions, or transformations of any film version simply because it is literature," "The best [re]writing … is that which is most easily consumed on the terms the author stipulates" (Leitch 17, 13, 11). Although not clear without context, Leitch is criticizing each of these claims. This, in turn, suggests Leitch supports a version of rewriting and adaptation that *does* go "outside the lines," that *does* add or transform the source text, and that the best rewriting need *not* adhere to the terms of the source text's original author. In summary, Leitch's notion of rewriting asserts the value of difference by arguing that these differences revel how the film deeply and productively engages with the themes

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and ideas within the source text. Importantly, this focus on difference is exactly what Bazin's theory does little to account for.

For this reason, Leitch will serve me well when modifying of Bazin's theory. In summary, my argument may be described as follows: Bazin's pyramidal-structure theory of adaptation and the work can effectively investigate certain films. However, Bazin's emphasis on the similarity between texts prevents more nuanced analyses of film adaptation. Leitch's model of adaptation as a form of rewriting, however, ameliorates these problems by acknowledging and embracing the differences existing between the adaptation and source text and which make the adaptation its own distinct work. When both source text and adapted film are recognized as their own entities, one can consider how these two individual works engage in conversation with each other to create a third distinct work, which *only* emerges from the two works' engagement with each other. This third work is the ideal work at the peak of Bazin's pyramid, which is truly ideal, as it exists in neither in the source text nor its film adaptation. In this way, my thesis reimagines Bazin's theory through Leitch, ultimately offering an alternate and productive metric to investigate film adaptation, thereby opening the door for new interpretive possibilities.

Case Studies

My thesis examines two film adaptations to make this argument: Timur Vermes' novel *Er ist Wieder Da* and David Wnendt's film of the same name and Rainer Maria Rilke's *Duineser Elegien* and Wim Wenders' film *Der Himmel über Berlin*.

Er ist Wieder Da, both as a novel and film, might be best described as a thought experiment: what would happen if Hitler reappeared in modern-day Berlin? The novel and film follow Hitler in the months after his mysterious appearance, during which he is taken as a dedicated method-actor and political critic. The thought experiments ends by suggesting Hitler's opinions would respond to contemporary political and social concerns and he would find acceptance in current society. While the source text and the film contain formal differences, the concept and theme of the two works is mostly the same; simply put, the adaptation is fairly straight-forward. For this reason, Bazin's similarity-centered model helpfully guides an investigation of this adaptaion. However, even aspects of *Er ist Wieder Da* still hint that Bazin's theory might face troubles when confronted when a more complex film adaptation.

The adaptation of Rilke's *Duineser Elegien* into *Der Himmel über Berlin* serves as an example for which Bazin's theory is under-equipped. This body of poetry contains ten individual elegies, across which spans a vast interweaving thematic network with a number of recurring motifs. While reducing the focus of the elegies' anonymous speaker to merely one topic cheapens the text's nuance and richness, the speaker is deeply concerned with the limitations of human existence. Unlike *Er ist Wieder Da*, the film adaptation of Rilke's work*, Der Himmel über Berlin*, warrants entirely its own description— primarily because the source poems offer no actual plot to adapt. Wenders' film centers largely on Damiel, one of many immortal, invisible, and mind-reading angels inhabiting Berlin. The film focuses on Damiel as he grows tired of being an angel and chooses to become human. An adaptation like this, which differs so strongly from its source text, challenges Bazin's theory by offering few similarities to closely investigate.

Furthermore, restricting analysis only to such similarities limits the interpretive

possibilities. For this reason, I use my modification of Bazin's theory to investigate this

adaptation, conclusively demonstrating why and how modifying Bazin is ultimately the

right move within adaptation studies, as it allows and embraces more nuanced readings of

the engagement between film and text.

Chapter 1: *Er ist Wieder Da*

Er ist Wieder Da is both a best-selling novel by Timur Vermes, published in 2012, and 2015 film by Peter Wnendt. The novel's financial success was likely a primary motive for the film's making; the gap of only a few years between their releases suggests film development began quickly after the novel's publishing. Its clearly financial aims may also explain the lack of academic attention— *Er ist Wieder Da*'s shock value has garnered attention from reviews and articles, but little academic consideration— an oversight I will correct in my analysis. As per Bazin's theory, I examine the novel and film as a single work and identify the aspects which characterize the work as a whole; that is, aspects which are present in both novel and film. Having identified these characteristics, I consider how they convey the work's political message. As this political message has been unveiled by Bazin's theory, it demonstrates a situation in which this theory can productively assist in understanding a work. I will then argue Bazin's methodology functions well because *Er ist Wieder Da* is a straightforward adaptation, but even such an ideal case study reveals the limitations of his approach— which bodes poorly for more complex adaptations and interpretations.

Characteristics of the Work: Basic Premise

A first basic component of *Er ist Wieder Da* is the plot and characters. As previously described, *Er ist Wieder* Da follows Hitler after he reappears in contemporary Berlin and observes his growing popularity, which shows no sign of ceasing by the story's end. The work features Hitler as the main character and the most prominent

supporting characters are Sawatzki, Fraulein Krömeier, Sensenbrink, and Frau Bellini.

There are minor differences between novel and film: their plots are not identical and both

the characters and their relationships vary somewhat. For example, while Sawatzki is

heavily featured in the film, serving as Hitler's constant companion and friend, their

relationship is less intimate in the novel. However, such differences are largely

insignificant when viewing the work as a whole. This aspect of the work is rudimentary,

but the characters and plot underpin the entire work and are thus important to

acknowledge and an apt place to begin this investigation.

Characteristics of the Work: First-Person Perspective

The work is also importantly defined by the first-person perspective, which is

essential in shaping the film's political message. Vermes' novel garnered attention for

being written in the first person, while the film conveys this perspective with voiceover

narration and point-of-view (POV) shots. As a formal technique, first-person perspective

uniquely divulges the innermost thoughts of the speaker. This technique encourages the

reader to "see" the world from the speaker's eyes and walk a metaphorical mile in their

shoes, fostering a sense of understanding in the reader or viewer. Importantly, beyond

mere understanding, first-person perspective is largely believed to encourage

identification between the reader and the speaker. In *Empathy and the Novel*, Suzanne

Keen writes, "A commonplace of narrative theory suggests that an internal perspective

best promotes character identification and readers' empathy. Achieved through first-

person self-narration … an inside view should increase the chance of character

identification" (Keen 97). Keen uses "should" here, as she later presents evidence that

argues internal perspectives are not inordinately successful at fostering reader

identification. Regardless of inordinate success, however, this perspective still encourages identification and, I would argue, even the gesture of placing readers or viewers inside the speaker's mind is important when the speaker is of such infamous historical standing. Wayne Booth in *Rhetoric of Fiction* corroborates this claim, positing, "If an author wants intense sympathy for characters who do not have strong virtues to recommend them, then the psychic vividness of prolonged inside views will help him" (Booth 377 - 378). This quote shows how first-person perspective functions within *Er ist Wieder Da*, given its unlikeable main character. Likely every reader and viewer enters the work with preconceived notions of who Hitler is. First-person perspective pushes the reader to look past these preconceptions to recognize the man beneath the historical and political persona. In this way, first-person perspective encourages the humanization of Hitler.

Of course, causing the run-of-the-mill reader or viewer to identify with Hitler is no small task. However, the intimate exposure of first-person perspective allows the reader or viewer to learn personal details about Hitler which are common to most people. Hitler has experienced love and loss, while his astonishment and perplexity at modern technology resembles that of older generations. In one scene, Hitler and Sawatzki talk about their difficulties with women over the years. Conversations like these reveal small details that portray Hitler differently than common historical depictions, emphasizing the personal man rather than the public figure. For this reason, the reader or viewer begins to recognize Hitler as another person, connected to themselves by shared human experiences. In fact, the reader or viewer may even sympathize with Hitler. In the novel, for example, Hitler's reflections during the Christmas season, a time to be with family

and friends, are particularly poignant. He thinks: "Das einzige Unangenehme an dieser Weihnachtszeit ist für mich immer gewesen, dass mir in jenen Tagen auffiel, dass mir eine eigene Familie niemals vergönnt war" (Vermes 272). By revealing his longing for human companionship, this quote demonstrates that even famous historical figures shares basic human desires. The strength of this desire, as well as the fact that it goes unfulfilled and Hitler spends Christmas alone in the hospital, further humanize Hitler. Regardless of who Hitler is, the loneliness he feels during the holidays is touching, and the reader empathizes with him. In this moment, the reader is able to perceive and connect with Hitler as a lonely old man, if not the historical dictator. This example from the novel is representative of *Er ist Wieder Da* as a collective work, which uses first-person perspective to slowly peel away the historical conceptions and depictions of Hitler to reveal the man underneath, who, while no ordinary person, is still human.

The film of *Er ist Wieder Da* uses voiceover narration and point of view (POV) shots, the cinematic counterparts to the novel's first-person perspective, to encourage identification and humanization of its central character. The film does not visually and aurally relay the story entirely through Hitler's perspective, but this is due to formal differences and stylistic decisions. As a visual medium, film can both show *and* tell; the narrator doesn't need to describe basic action, which the viewer sees for themselves. Using entirely POV shots would be unusual and stylistically jarring, making such a strong stylistic choice unappealing, if only for purely financial reasons. However, the film uses these techniques during the beginning, thereby immersing the viewer in Hitler's perspective and establishing the precedent that the viewer remains aware of this perspective, even when the techniques are no longer used. The film thus prompts the viewer to consider how and

why Hitler experiences the world around him, allowing viewers to understand Hitler more deeply, both as a controversial figure, but more fundamentally as another man and human.

Characteristics of the Work: Comedy

Another key component of *Er ist Wieder Da* is its use of comedy; because above all, the work is a comedy. The source of this comedy stems from one basic premise. In "Haha Hitler! Coming to Terms with Dani Levy", Peter Gölz analyses the intersection of comedy and depictions of Hitler and argues this specific comedic form, and comedy in general, relies on bringing together two seemingly incompatible things. In *Er ist Wieder Da*, these incompatible entities are Hitler and contemporary Germany.

The work's humor is rooted in the disconnect between Hitler's inaccurate interpretations of the world and what the reader knows to be true— put differently, it stems from the reader or viewer's awareness of Hitler's incompatibility with contemporary society. For example, in both the novel's and film's opening scene, a confused Hitler attempts to get help from a group of young soccer-playing boys. He is perplexed at the absence of the Hitlergruß (Nazi salute) and why his questions about the locations of Martin Bormann are met only with confusion. As the boys turn and leave, he misconstrues the name "Ronaldo" on the back of one boy's shirt to be his name, calling after him, "Hitlerjunge Ronaldo! Wo geht es zur Straße?" (Vermes 13). This situation is only funny because the reader or viewer understands what Hitler does not: why the boys don't greet Hitler with the Hitlergruß, where Bormann is, and that "Ronaldo" isn't the name of the boy, but rather the famous soccer player whose jersey the boy is wearing. Most importantly, the reader or viewer knows where, or rather when, Hitler is, which

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underlies Hitler's confusion. This dynamic is described by Gérard Genette here: "… we should not confuse the *information* given by a focalized narrative with the *interpretation* the reader is called on to give of it …. It has often been noted that [the speaker] sees or hears thing that [they do] not understand but that the reader will decipher with no trouble" (Genette 197). This quote describes how the reader or viewer is expected to understand more than Hitler and recognize his ineptitude at navigating contemporary society— more simply, his incompatibility with our current era. This, in turn, allows the reader or viewer to enjoy the story as a comedy. Comedy also humanizes Hitler; by depicting him being uncertain, confused, and in need of help, it shows the normal man that exists behind the confident historical leader. In summary, Hitler's perceived incompatibility with contemporary society is the source of humor within the work and humanizes him.

Another source of comedy, similarly based on the incongruency between Hitler and contemporary Germany, are Hitler's opinions, which are ridiculous to the typical reader. For example, in one scene Hitler receives an email from someone asking him about dogs, wondering "Welches ist die beste Hunderasse der Welt, welches die schlechteste? Und wer ist der Jude unter den Hunden?" (Vermes 240). Hitler takes this question very seriously and responds to the email with great gusto, describing the nuances of the question and asserting, "Selbstverständlich gibt es einen Judenhund" (Vermes 242). This humor again relies on the reader's superior understanding. To the reader, it is clear that this email is sarcastic and actually mocking Hitler, but Hitler is oblivious to this likelihood and his naively serious response portrays him as oblivious and stupid by contemporary standards. In addition, the basic premise of Hitler's assumption

that Jews are inferior is unlikely to be held by the reader, making the idea of a lesser, "Jewish" breed of dog laughable. For these reasons, the entire scene is completely absurd, and the reader can humorously deride Hitler and enjoy the moral satisfaction of mocking his political beliefs. Likewise, the film features a scene in which Hitler describes the dangers of interracial relationships using the metaphor of the mating and offspring of a German Shepherd and a Dachshund (Wnendt 34:08). It is very important to note, however, a dangerous aspect of this comedy. In particular, it disarms the very real threat of Hitler's political opinions. The reader laughs at the interaction instead of considering the dangerous underlying concept: the superiority of the German "race" over others. In this way, the work's comedy has a dark side.

Ultimately, we can make three claims about the humor in *Er ist Wieder Da*. It relies on the incongruency between Hitler and contemporary Germany and the reader's superior understanding. In addition, humor humanizes Hitler by depicting a very different image of Hitler than the dominant historical and political conception. Last, humor causes viewers to overlook and underestimate the deeply troubling nature of Hitler's beliefs.

Characteristics of the Work: Authentication

A final important element in *Er ist Wieder Da* is the work's attempts to authenticate its story. In the novel, this is achieved by the rendering of newspaper articles and other documents. These texts are not simply quoted, but transplanted into the text with the same formatting as they would have had in their original context. This holds true for online articles (Vermes 217, 225, 231, 275) and the aforementioned email about the purity of dog breeds (Vermes 240). In a text written in first person, choosing to depict the texts themselves, rather than just containing Hitler's summary of these articles, is

significant. These texts represent the only instances in which the story is not entirely mediated through Hitler's perspective; while he reacts to these articles, the reader sees and reads them for themselves. Further, because they retain the format of an actual article or email, these texts seem not only to originate from outside of Hitler's head, but outside of the fictional story-world completely. For this reason, these texts subtly prompt the reader to consider the novel's real-world relevance. Accordingly, what seem like relatively unimportant moments within the novel's larger narrative are actually highly significant, serving as brief, but important moments in which the story is authenticated by an "outside" source. Of course, these sources are not actually "outside" the fictional world of the novel, but they still encourage the reader to engage with the novel's political content and consider what it suggests about our contemporary political moment.

The film also establishes its authenticity through mockumentary sequences, which show the film's relevance to contemporary German society. A mockumentary is "[a] film, television programme, etc., which adopts the form of a serious documentary in order to satirize its subject" ("Mockumentary, n."), which accurately describes this aspect of the film. These scene are certainly satirical, using "humor, irony, exaggeration or ridicule to expose and critique prevailing immorality or foolishness, esp. as a form of social or political commentary" ("Satire, n.")— here, the basic humor and exaggeration is Hitler's presence and the extremity of his beliefs. Often referred to as Borat-esque (Buß; Connolly; Huggler), these sequences feature an in-character Masucci as he interacts with normal Germans. Many of these scenes take place when Hitler and Sawatzki travel the country to talk with real Germans about their dissatisfactions with Germany's current circumstances, whether political, social, or otherwise. In these conversations, the

individuals express their frustrations, and many respond positively to Hitler's assessment

of the issues in German society. These scenes are particularly powerful because the

individuals Hitler speaks to are not actors, and their responses are not scripted.[1] Their

approval and affirmation of Hitler's rhetoric are genuine. Importantly, because these

sequences use normal, non-actor Germans, the significance of these scenes extends

beyond the mere scope of the film. Such montages demonstrate that *Er ist Wieder Da* as a

thought experiment is perhaps not as hypothetical as one might imagine. It is no longer a

question *if* Hitler's ideas would resonate contemporarily; in these sequences, the viewer

sees undeniable evidence that his ideas *already do*. This authenticates the relevance of the

film's basic premise—would Hitler's ideas resonate today with contemporary German

citizens?—and compelling demonstrates the question and its answer hold significance not

only within the film, but also the real world.

Political Message

These are the four main features which characterize *Er ist Wieder Da* as a single,

unified work. The novel and film share the same basic premise, humanize Hitler by

conveying his perspective, emphasize humor, and authenticate the relevance of the story

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[1] I note the film blurs the lines between documentary, mockumentary, and scripted
narrative film by making it difficult to tell which scenes are scripted. During my research,
I failed to find sources that clarify exactly what is staged. The film also mixes these
styles; for example, Hitler's visit to the headquarters of the far-right National Democratic
Party of Germany (NPD) (Wnendt 1:17:49) blurs these distinctions— the outside of the
building is actually the political group's headquarters, but the scenes within are scripted
and only filmed to resemble mockumentary. For these reasons, I can't say with complete
certain how much of these sequences are actually real. However, I suggest the question is
largely irrelevant— if the viewer believes these scenes are real and reacts accordingly,
they might as well be.

outside of the fictional story-world. Having used Bazin's theory to identify these primary characteristics, we are now primed to consider these elements together to ultimately identify the ideal work that connects these two texts. I propose the ideal work that unites *Er ist Wieder Da*, in any form it takes, is ultimately the troubling political message that is weaved throughout the story.

  Er ist Wieder Da's message is one of the importance of political awareness and vigilance. First, the work makes the reader or viewer stop viewing Hitler as a legitimate political figure, and accordingly political threat, by humanizing him and using comedy to depict him as inept and outdated. At the same time, however, the work authenticates the story to suggest Hitler's ideas would, and more importantly, *do* resonate in contemporary society. By doing so simultaneously, the work incriminates the reader for ignoring the very real troubling moral implications and relevance of the story's narrative. The reader or viewer might then defend themselves. While they may accept they were too quick to enjoy Hitler's antics as mere entertainment, this work is still ultimately fictional, and the reader or viewer can claim in real life, they would not complacently watch Hitler reenter the political arena. Finally, however, because the work emphasizes how Hitler is, beneath it all, just another person, it accordingly emphasizes that there can be other men like Hitler. For this reason, it accentuates the vital importance of being vigilant of all political and public figures, not only those that are conveniently marked by a swastika— like the other right-wing political figures featured in the film. Therefore, *Er ist Wieder Da* as a work may ultimately defined as a cautionary tale that emphasizes the necessity of political engagement and awareness.

Assessment of Bazin's Theory

This case study exemplifies a situation in which Bazin's theory functions relatively well. By viewing *Er ist Wieder Da* as a single unified work, I identified and then analyzed key aspects existing within the novel and film to reveal the work's political message. *Er ist Wieder Da* can be so fruitfully examined using Bazin's framework because it is a straightforward adaptation. Ignoring the necessary formal differences, the two texts closely resemble each other, offering a number of similarities to investigate. In addition, the text itself is largely cinematic, emphasizing both aural and visual aspects of the narrative. This make it easy to imagine the story told through the visual and aural medium of film and minimizes even the most necessary of formal differences. Here, I examine more closely the aspects of *Er ist Wieder Da* that make it so suitable for Bazin's theory.

The novel is marked by a distinct emphasis of the story's auditory elements, particularly dialogue. For example, the dialogue of Hitler's assistant, Fräulin Krömeier, is written to showcase her particular accent and dialect. For example, when Krömeier first meets Hitler, she attempts to address him in what she deems the "proper" way— very loudly: "HAM DIE BEI DEM HITLA IMMA ALLE DAUERND JESCHREIN?" (Vermes 124). The use of "j" instead of "g," as well as lack of hard "er"s renders Krömeier's informal Berlin accent, while the capitals convey the volume of her lines. This style of writing dialogue goes beyond typographic norms to convey more than the dialogue's content, but also the distinct way individual characters sound.

Most importantly, this method allows Vermes' to accurately render the distinctive way of speaking belonging to one of history's most (in)famous rhetoricians: Hitler. His

rhetoric is depicted in both informal and formal situations. For example, when Hitler first

meets the clumsy Sensenbrink, he interrogates him about Poland, mocking his ignorance:

"'Das', erwiderte ich knapp, 'ist Bücherwissen. Jede Papiermotte kann derlei in sich

hineinfressen. Beantworten Sie meine Frage!'" (Vermes 64). Even in a casual

conversation, Hitler is terse and aggressive, and it is easy to imagine these lines barked

out in a way typically associated with Hitler's speech. Hitler's broadcasted speeches also

emphasize his oratory style. He opens the speech that marks his debut:

> Volksgenossen und Volksgenossinnen!
> Was ich
> was wir
> soeben
> in zahlreichen
> Beiträgen
> gesehen haben,
> ist wahr. (Vermes 159)

Like the previous example, this speech is written to convey how Hitler sounds. Rendering

his speech over numerous lines emphasizes the pauses that break up Hitler's speech and

suggest the captivated silence of the audience. These pauses also hint at the tone of

Hitler's speech, implying he delivers his lines calmly, with poise and deliberation. In

addition, Hitler's distinctive and powerful speeches are well known and likely familiar to

the reader. Because of this, the reader can use their own knowledge to better imagine how

Hitler delivers these lines. In this way, Vermes' style of writing dialogue conjures the

very sound of Hitler's speeches. While it is important to accurately render the speech of

someone so famous for that ability, this technique also makes the text highly promising

for an aural medium like film.

   The unique format of the excerpt above also demonstrates *Er ist Wieder Da*'s

emphasis on the visual aspects of both the text itself and its narrative content. Above, the

visual spacing influences the story by allowing the reader to "hear" Hitler. Even the fonts of the text play into this visual emphasis. For example, certain words are written in Fraktur, including the first chapter heading, "Erwachen in Deutschland" (Vermes 5), the chapter numbers, and words on Hitler's website. In fact, all of the words taken from Hitler's website are in bolded Fraktur, including "Heimseite" and "Führerhauptquartier" (Vermes 138, 245, 294). Fraktur's historical usage has been dominated by its use in Nazi propaganda, as the Nazi regime considered it representative of real, traditional Germany and used it in propaganda posters, films, and state documents. This association has tainted Fraktur's usage and it still remains controversial. This use of Fraktur accesses this loaded political history and demonstrates how the novel considers its abilities as a visual medium to contribute to the text as a whole. The rendering of newspaper articles and other documents serves as another example, which I discussed previously. This further demonstrates how the novel recognizes and uses text as a visual medium to contribute to the reading experience.

It is finally important to briefly note the visual promise of the book's premise itself. Watching Hitler as he attempts to navigate 70 years of significant change in Germany has the potential to be both highly comedic and intriguing, a potential explained by Gölz's definition of comedy stemming from the bringing together incompatible things. While the reader can imagine Hitler in full uniform walking around contemporary Berlin, film can easily bring this to life. Together, these examples showcase why *Er ist Wieder Da* lends itself so well to film adaptation: for a text, it uniquely emphasizes the story's visual and auditory elements that would easily and fruitfully be realized in a film format. This aptitude ultimately makes *Er ist Wieder Da* a straightforward adaptation.

However, there are still evident limitations when investigating *Er ist Wieder Da* as Bazin outlines. For example, while the novel and film share a political message, this political message is conveyed very differently. This difference hinges on the film's ample use of mockumentary sequences, which aggressively demonstrate the film's contemporary relevance, and the film's starkly different end, which pointedly implicates the viewer within Hitler's successful reentry into the political arena. These changes importantly shape how clearly the film's political message is conveyed to the film's viewers— which is significant for *Er ist Wieder Da*, whose story is pressingly relevant to our contemporary political climate.

Limitations: Political Message

I return here to the film's use of mockumentary, as Bazin's restrictive methodology overlooked key aspects of its role within the film and particularly how it pointedly imparts the film's political significance. First, these sequences dominate the film, which contains roughly 30 minutes of mockumentary footage documenting Hitler's interactions with actual Germans and also ends with footage of a similar style (which I examine more closely below). I have already shown such sequences reveal Hitler's contemporary resonance is no longer a hypothetical possibility, but already a reality that must be acknowledged and confronted. Because of this, the amount of time allotted to these sequences reveals the film's dedication to showing the real-world significance of this "thought experiment" (a label that no longer applies). Mockumentary's function also changes throughout the film, from emphasizing the humor of Hitler's return to focusing on its troubling implications. The first mockumentary scene, which opens the film, does reference Hitler's political beliefs, but only so far as they make his interaction with an

unassuming manners coach comically entertaining. A later mockumentary scene, in

contrast, shows Hitler's meeting with the Deputy Chairman of Germany's National

Democratic Party. When asked if he would follow Hitler, the chairman pauses and asks

that the recording equipment be turned off (the cameraman instead merely faces the

camera downward), before admitting, "Wenn sie der echte wäre, wahrscheinlich schon"

(Wnendt 1:16:37). This quote reveals what the NDP, and other right-wing parties, can

publicly not admit: they are inspired by Hitler and aim to continue his work in

contemporary Germany. Here, mockumentary is used for much more than comedic

effect. The film's closing scene goes even further, containing a montage of actual right-

wing demonstrations. This footage is unavoidably political and not at all funny. In fact,

without the comedy and satire that defines mockumentary, this serious closing footage

more resembles true documentary. Thus, we see the film first uses mockumentary to

depict Hitler comedically, but later uses it to emphasize the gravity of his presence and

finally turns to actual documentary to definitively prove the film's relevance

contemporarily. Doing so, the film conveys *Er ist Wieder Da*'s political message more

pointedly than the novel.

  The second pivotal aspect of the film which demands closer analysis is the film's

end, which, unlike the novel, shifts the tone of *Er ist Wieder Da* to emphasize its

seriousness and strongly implicates the viewer within the story's troubling political

message. My examination will focus on how the texts diverge after a conflict revolving

around Fräulein Krömeier. In the novel, this scene unfolds when Fräulein Krömeier

unexpectedly tells Hitler she can no longer work for him, due to her grandmother's

protests. Krömeier shows Hitler a photo of her grandmother's family, who were killed

during WWII. Believing that her family were killed during bombings Hitler promises, with teary eyes, never to allow an English bomber near Germany again. But Krömeier's family were Jewish Germans killed in the concentration camps and she coldly responds, "Bitte … bitte hören Se mal einen Moment auf. Nur *einen* Moment. Se wissen doch überhaupt nicht, wovon Se reden" (Vermes 311), shouts at him, and harshly attacks his flimsy excuses. In response, Hitler is uncharacteristically "ratlos," "überrascht," and "verblüfft" (313) and his reply is broken up with halting pauses, during which he grapples with how to respond. Krömeier then makes a simple request of Hitler, asking "können Se nicht eenfach mal sagen: 'Es tut mir leid mit der Familie von Ihrer Oma, det war ein grauenhafter Irrsin damals'?" (313 - 314). However, Hitler instead reminds Krömeier that he was elected by the German people and to condemn him is to condemn the entire German population in the 1930s. His usual confidence restored, Hitler writes off Krömeier as an emotional woman and the conversation ends.

This scene is the first and only time Hitler is held directly accountable for his actions, importantly by someone seriously affected by his political beliefs. Krömeier's aggression and refusal to be satisfied by meek explanations disarms Hitler briefly and breaks down his usually unshakable composure. Importantly, this scene doesn't just demonstrate to Hitler the lasting, deeply negative impacts of his leadership, but also to the reader. Accordingly, this moment confronts the reader with Hitler's past crimes and truly dangerous political ideology, both of which they have been ignoring to enjoy the novel purely for its entertainment value. This moment is made more pointed by the serious tone, which stands out in a novel largely defined by its humor. However, because the scene ends with Hitler regaining composure and dismissing Krömeier's concerns, the

scene lacks lasting power; the confrontation remains only a speedbump that has no lasting impact on Hitler's rise to power, nor does it linger in the reader's mind.

Within the film, this conflict is handled very differently and completely redirects the trajectory of the film, raising its political stakes to new extremes. First, the movie heightens the drama by removing the middleman and bringing Hitler and Krömeier's grandmother together. On seeing Hitler, her grandmother is shocked and confused, but resolute that he is the real Hitler. The scene is largely similar to the novel, but Krömeier's place is taken by that of her grandmother. Again, Hitler misinterprets that her family was killed by English bombings and again he is corrected. However, the film uses the allowances of its medium to increase the emotional impact. Sound allows the viewer to hear the dialogue's tone and volume, which convey the old woman's anger; Her cry, "Raus, du Verbrecher!" is filled with rage and hostility. Somber music also underscores the confrontation's emotional magnitude. A deep, subtle and ominous rumbling builds as Krömeier's Grandmother recognizes Hitler's voice, then punctuated by a deep, lingering bass note as she turns to face him. A sorrowful melody then rises, climbing to a climax and then cutting off as she asks, simply but with a hint of desperation, "tut was" (Wnendt 1:35:41) to her granddaughter. The use of silence also importantly allows the woman's words and their weight to, quite literally, speak for themselves.

This scene is also visually powerful. The viewer watches the woman's expression shift from horrified disbelief to resolute steadfastness and finally to unrestrained rage. The visual contrast between the infirm old woman and Hitler's towering and sturdy frame makes her unforgiving condemnation all the more impressive. In arguably the scene's most powerful moment, Frau Krömeier leans in close to Hitler and looks him

unwaveringly in the eyes, saying in a measured, but loaded whisper, "Ich weiß, wer du bist" (Wnendt 1:36:15). When she demands that Hitler leave, the camera zooms in on Sawatzki's horrified expression. In this moment, Sawatzki sees his actions in a new light and realizes that parading Hitler around Germany is not an innocent act, but has serious moral implications which cannot be overlooked. This scene also importantly implicates the viewer. Remembering Hitler's rise to power, Frau Krömeier says, "Damals haben die Leute am Anfang auch gelacht" (Wnendt 1:36:07). The viewer is guilty of this same misstep: they also laughed at Hitler, both in scripted scenes but more importantly also the authenticating mockumentary scenes, which so clearly pointed out the seriousness and stakes of Hitler's reemergence, rather than question the real implications of his presence. In this way, the scene transforms the film's mood from lightly entertaining, albeit with political undertones, to overtly political and accusatory of the viewer's own culpability.

This scene irrevocably shifts the film's tone from humorous to deeply serious. It is immediately followed by a storyline, not present in the novel, in which Sawatzki learns Hitler is the real historical figure and tries to warn other characters. Instead Sawatzki is believed to have gone insane and committed to an insane asylum. The film closes with a scene of Hitler driving off, with no one to hinder his reimmersion in modern Germany. This final scene hammers the nail in the coffin that is *Er ist Wieder Da*'s bleak and sobering political message. A clear homage to Riefenstahl's *Triumph des Willens*, the scene watches as Hitler drives through the city in an open car, waving at passersby. At first, the scene is humorous. In the background, "Er ist Wieder Da," a 1969 song performed by Katja Ebstein (*Look Who's Back (2015) - IMDb*) plays. However, the tone

changes as people on the street start to greet Hitler with salutes and the song slows, deepening and warping the singer's voice.

The song then fades out completely, replaced by a triumphant, magisterial, and somewhat ominous song, complete with trumpets blaring. Visual cues also change as the film leaves behind the bright, sunny day for the darkening night and orange streetlights, which cast dark shadows on Hitler's face. In the dim light and harsh shadows, Hitler is easily recognizable as a historical criminal. The scene then morphs into a montage of newsreels and video footage: again, as this footage is neither satirical nor comedic in any way, they more accurately embody documentary, rather than mockumentary, style. Images of politicians, sports games, anti-immigration and anti-refugee gatherings, nationalistic marches and demonstrations, violent riots, and more flash across the screen. The final clip in this montage shows a German nationalist demonstration, in which the crowd holds flags and chants, "Wir sind das Volk! Wir sind das Volk!" (*Er ist Wieder Da*, 1:51:25). The camera then returns to Hitler— facing forward, face set in a slight grimace, he seems determined and prepared. His final words reflect this; "Damit kann man arbeiten" (1:51:28) he says conclusively. As the screen turns black, the crowd chants, one last time, "Wir sind das Volk!"

This ending is *extremely* ominous and pointedly demonstrates that our contemporary moment is highly conducive to Hitler's return and entry into the political arena. The film thus ends on a dark and deeply foreboding note, confronting the viewer with the very real outcomes of not taking dangerous political rhetoric seriously. Importantly, the novel's end is nowhere near as sinister, foreboding, or accusatory; of the two, the film much more aggressively conveys *Er ist Wieder Da*'s political message.

The film's aggressive treatment of *Er ist Wieder Da*'s political message takes on additional importance when considering its deeply relevant nature. Right-wing political groups and parties have recently been gaining, and continue to gain, popularity throughout Europe ("These 5 Countries Show How the European Far-Right Is Growing in Power") and specifically Germany, where, for example, the far-right Alternative für Deutschland have become the country's second most popular political party (tagesschau.de). Given this, the novel's treatment of *Er ist Wieder Da*'s political message can be viewed as a flaw. The novel does encourage critical political awareness, but this idea is never explicitly referenced or pointed to. Instead, the novel relies on the reader to engage with the text to realize this important message, a level of engagement which cannot be guaranteed. If the novel risks making the political message ineffectual by potentially conveying too subtly, the film's politically aggressive ending decidedly refuses to take that chance. With a work like *Er ist Wieder Da*, which is so highly pertinent to an era marked by increasing support of right-wing movements in Germany and beyond, this difference is important to recognize— and is exactly the kind of difference Bazin's framework overlooks.

Final Assessment of Bazin

This poignantly demonstrates the limitations of Bazin's similarity-centric methodology, which does not account for this key difference between *Er ist Wieder Da* in its novel and film version. Bazin's framework effectively identified the political message in *Er ist Wieder Da*, but it is not only the content of the work which is important, but also *how* this content is conveyed. Considering a textbook adaptation like *Er ist Wieder Da* is such a strong candidate to be analyzed using Bazin's theory, these clear limitations

suggest Bazin's framework may not be suited for fruitfully investigating more complex

adaptations.

Chapter 2: *Duineser Elegien* and *Der Himmel über Berlin*

My investigation of *Er ist Wieder Da* demonstrated how Bazin's methodology is limited even when applied to the most ideal test case: while Bazin's theory helped identify the work and its political message, it wrongfully overlooks the different ways the texts convey this message. My investigation of the adaptation of Rainer Maria Rilke's *Duineser Elegien*, from 1923, into Wim Wender's 1988 film *Der Himmel über Berlin* will push Bazin's theory further and ultimately demonstrate its fundamental flaws. An investigation of these texts guided by Bazin would be very restrictive, as the two contain few similarities and even then, these similarities often contain, upon deeper analysis, key differences. Thomas Martinec's article, "'Some kind of film-poem': the poetry of Wim Wenders' *Der Himmel Über Berlin/Wings of Desire*" perhaps most closely resembles a Bazin-esque analysis. In it, Martinec identifies formal similarities between the texts to argue the film is basically a poem told through the medium of film. While a worthy argument, this conclusion is too simple to recognize the complexity of the adaptation. On the other hand, most other academic articles on the film overlook Rilke's role in the film, focusing instead on Peter Handke's literary presence and his collaboration with Wim Wenders (Barry; Caldwell and Rea; Kuzniar; Malaguti). Simply put, little academic attention has gone towards analyzing Wenders' film as an adaptation and those that do are limited. In this case study, I will both give *Der Himmel über Berlin* the attention it warrants as a work of adaptation, as well as use it to demonstrate why Bazin's theory must be modified to accommodate more complicated works of adaptation.

My modification of Bazin's theory is guided by Leitch's emphasis on rewriting, which allows us to give equal weight to differences between the two texts. Unlike Bazin, I consider each text its own unique work and examine the characteristics that define each individual work. By emphasizing their uniqueness, I highlight the differences between the source work and adapted work. This is aided by Leitch's argument that rewriting is a form of interpretation and engagement with the source text: essentially, the differences between the works are instances of rewriting, when the film departs from the source text to engage with its ideas more deeply. I would note, however, that my methodology does not negate the existence or importance of similarities, but simply refuses to place such commonalities at the center of film adaptation.

My methodology demands both breadth and depth, as I consider each text as its own work while also examining their connection. The thoroughness of this approach also risks confusing the organization of this section; for this reason, I provide a clear outline here: First, I examine the first-person speaker in Rilke's *Duineser Elegien* and then the many first-person speakers in *Der Himmel über Berlin*, then briefly consider the speakers of these two works together. Second, I investigate the emotional tone or atmosphere of each individual work and how they compare to each other. Third, I describe and analyze how and when this emotional tone changes within the two works, which also results in identifying a major theme of each work. Last, I close this section by bringing the two works together and identify a Third Work that arises only when the *Duineser Elegien* and *Der Himmel über Berlin* are considered in conversation with each other, thereby demonstrating how my adapted version of Bazin's methodology can fruitfully tackle more complex adaptations and open the door for new interpretive possibilities.

The Works: First-Person Perspective

As a work, The *Duineser Elegien* is shaped by its single, isolated speaker, who laments the limitations of human existence and imagines the existence of superior angelic beings. This speaker is introduced and concisely characterized within the *Elegies*' opening line: "Wer, wenn ich schriee, hörte mich denn aus der Engel / Ordnungen?" (Rilke 4). The hypothetical nature of this question is conveyed by the subjunctive mood of "schriee" and "hörte" and establishes the speaker's bleak pessimism. The speaker is so certain of the futility of calling out that this idea is only hypothetically entertained and then rejected. From the outset, the speaker has already given up on being heard and thus passively submits to their isolation. The first-person perspective promptly places the reader within the head of this solitary figure, from whose perspective the entirety of the elegies is written.

Although this speaker holds such a significant role within the *Elegies*, they remain anonymous, a choice that shapes reader engagement with the work. The speaker lacks any characteristics that might distinguish them as a specific individual. This anonymity is interesting to consider in conjunction with first-person perspective's ability to encourage identification with the speaker. Because the speaker is only defined by their musings on the difficult nature of human life, the reader is encouraged to identify with these musings, rather than the person expressing these ideas. As Gérard Genette writes in *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method*, "… the work is ultimately … only an optical instrument the author offers the reader to help him read within himself" (Genette 261). This quote suggests that the elegiac speaker's thoughts are meant to reflect those of the reader and implies he speaker exists more as a mouthpiece to express human frustrations with their

way of life than as a real, identifiable individual. The speaker confirms their role through

their constant use of "wir" or "uns" throughout the *Elegies*, thereby speaking for all

humans. In this way, the speaker's role within the *Elegies*' is to be a spokesperson for all

of humanity.

The speaker describes the experience of being human, largely through contrast

with the *Elegies*' non-human characters, including plants, animals, and angels. The motif

of plants is introduced by the speaker's thoughts on flowers: "Siehe, wir lieben nicht, wie

die Blumen, aus einem / einzigen Jahr; uns steigt, wo wir lieben, / unvordenklicher Saft

in die Arme" (Rilke 20). Here, the speaker first connects human and plant through the

image of sap, but then sharply differentiates them by their relations to time. Unlike the

flower, the human is inextricably connected to its past. The word "unvordenklicher,"

meaning "immemorial," "ancient," or "ancestral" further suggests the individual is not

merely bound to their own individual past, but also the past of humanity itself. The

speaker contrasts the human to the flower to establish the unique human connection to

time. Later, the speaker repeats this move when addressing a fig tree: "wie du die Blüte

beinah ganz überschlägst / und hinein in die zeitig entschlossene Frucht, / ungerühmt,

drängst… " (Rilke 36). Here, "drängen" and the root of "schlagen" in "überschlagen,"

depict the fig's blooming as violently forceful and suggests the fig's certainty and

determination. Unlike the virile fig, the human is described by the speaker thus: "Wir

aber verweilen, / auch, uns rühmt es zu blühn, und ins verspätete Innre / unserer

endlichen Frucht gehn wir verraten hinein" (Rilke 36). Here, the human is faltering and

weak. "Verweilen" and "verspätete" again point to the human's connection to time and

characterize the human as uncertain, without direction, passion, or determination— all

which doom the human to betray their final "fruit"— whatever that may be. Here, the human bond with time is presented as an essentially human flaw. In this way, the speaker contrasts human and plant life to argue the human relation to time is a major shortcoming of human existence.

The speaker elaborates on the human's inextricable relation with time through another contrast— that between humans and animals. The eighth elegy examines the human preoccupation with death, which stems from an awareness of time— an awareness the animal lacks. The speaker muses how the animal is "[f]rei von Tod. / *Ihn* sehen wir allein; das Freie Tier / hat seinen Untergang stets hinter sich / … und wenn es geht, so gehts / in Ewigkeit" (Rilke 46). Here the speaker establishes that only humans see, or are aware of death, which causes the uniquely human engagement with mortality. In contrast, because the animal is unaware of its inevitable future death, the animal lives almost free from time and is quasi-immortal. The descriptor "frei" conveys how the human jealously "conflate[s] the ostensible lack of self-consciousness of animal life with freedom" (Santner 6). This is because the human is always aware of time's passing, and awareness of death prevents them from transcending their mortality like the animal: "*Wir* haben nie, nicht einen einzigen Tag, / den reinen Raum vor uns" (Rilke 46). The speaker ends the elegy by describing the effect of this awareness: "so leben wir und nehmen immer Abschied" (Rilke 50). This line describes how this awareness crucially shapes human existence. The knowledge of their death, but simultaneous inability to know the moment of its occurrence dooms humans to live as if they are always dying. In this way, they stand in direct contrast to the quasi-immortal animal. Here, the speaker juxtaposes the

human and animal to describe how the human connection to time fundamentally shapes human life, again bemoaning this uniquely human trait.

This description of human existence is completed when the speaker compares the human to the superior angelic figures of their imagination. Like the speaker themselves, these figures are introduced within the *Elegies*'s opening line, hinting at their significance throughout the work: "Wer, wenn ich schriee, hörte mich denn aus der Engel / Ordnungen?" (Rilke 4). This quote establishes the speaker's pessimism, but also characterizes the angels as superior beings unconcerned with paltry human existence. This superiority is overwhelming and destructive to the weaker human. The speaker remarks that if they were pressed against an angel, they would "von seinem / stärkeren Dasein [vergehen]" (Rilke 4). While "Dasein" might be interpreted as their physical existence, it more importantly and abstractly refers to angelic existence itself. This existence is so superior it destroys the relatively fragile human, even though the angels are indifferent to their lesser counterparts. The speaker writes: "Träte der Erzengel jetzt, der gefährliche, hinter den Sternen / eines Schrittes nur nieder und herwärts: hochauf- / schlagend erschlüg uns das eigene Herz." (Rilke 10). This quote is in the subjunctive, suggesting the angel would never be interested in the human enough to approach him. But if they were to approach, even if only by one step, it would necessarily destroy the speaker— not due to any violence of the angel, but rather due to the human's physical weakness and inferiority of their own immaterial Dasein. Referring to the angel as an archangel, calling it "gefährlich" and describing it as emerging from the heavens also clearly convey the angel's superiority. The angel, and the speaker's perspective of it, is concisely summed up by the famous opening lines of the second elegy: "Jeder Engel ist

schrecklich" (Rilke 10). "Schrecklich" means "terrifying," "horrible," and "awful," but also "tremendous," thereby showing that while the speaker fears the angel, it simultaneously recognizes and admires its magnificence.

The speaker traces the angels' superiority to their permanence, again demonstrating the speaker's fixation with time and human mortality. In the second elegy, the speaker reflects: "Denn wir, wo wir fühlen, verflüchtigen; ach wir / atmen uns aus und dahin" (Rilke 10). Here, "fading away" refers to and describes the transience nature of human life. Importantly, connecting this fading away to the necessary act of breathing establishes fading away as a constant process and intrinsic characteristic of human existence. The sentence's structure, "denn wir", asserts this description of human transience as a counterpoint to an earlier description— that of the angels, described as the "Frühe geglückte, ihr Verwöhnten der Schöpfung" (Rilke 10). "Verwöhnten" suggests these beings are favored over their human counterparts, bestowed with the gifts of immortality and permanence, and "geglückte" suggests the human is in contrast the "ungeglückte"— the meagre, impermanent, and ultimately insignificant failures of creation itself. This short stanza identifies the root of the angels' superiority: their immortality.

This in-depth analysis of the first-person speaker within the work of the *Duineser Elegien* can be summarized by two main points: 1. The anguished speaker expresses their perspective on human existence, but also functions as a spokesperson for all humanity. 2. The speaker describes this existence in contrast to plants, animals, and angels, identifying the human's inextricable connection to time as the fundamental source of human inferiority and suffering. Understanding the *Elegies*' central figure represents the first

step towards understanding this work as its own unique whole, before eventually bringing the two works together.

Der Himmel über Berlin's many first-person speakers are similarly central to the filmic work. The film uses voiceovers from these speakers to bleakly depict human life and existence. The speakers include anonymous passersby, an old man, a young trapeze artist, and an American actor. Both the form and content of these voiceovers contribute to the depiction of human life. Formally, these voiceovers are in the present tense, allowing the viewer to hear these thoughts at the moment the individual thinks them. This conveys a sense of immediacy and fleetingness, characterizing the nature of human thought while also reflecting the transiency of human life.

The content of these voiceovers more clearly contributes to the characterization of human existence. The individuals don't openly muse about the nature of human existence, as the speaker of the *Elegies* did. However, they give concrete examples of the hardships one faces during human life. Parents stress about their son's future, a desperate young woman attempts to prostitute herself after the death of a friend or lover, an old man grapples with the changes making his familiar Berlin unrecognizable (Wenders, *Der Himmel Über Berlin* 0:08:28, 0:44:41, 0:41:55). These voiceovers are deeply personal, revealing an uncensored glimpse of the internal world of each individual. Together, these musings convey a disheartening depiction of the experience of human life by vividly illustrating the difficulty of navigating the many hardships that mark it.

Here, I use my methodology to investigate the speaker or speakers within the source text and adapted film. Similarities between the works are uncovered even when considering them independently: in each work, the speaker or speakers paint a grave

picture of human existence. However, while *Der Himmel über Berlin* provides concrete examples of the hardships which mark human life—sickness, death, love, hopelessness, stress, fear of the future— only the *Duineser Elegien* overtly identifies the source of these struggles—the human relation to time—and asserts this connection as the fundamental cause of human inferiority. By recognizing each text as its own work, I identify both similarities and differences between the first-person speaker or speakers in the *Duineser Elegien* and *Der Himmel über Berlin*. Doing so, we both comprehensively understand their function within their respective works as well as how the speaker figures engage with each other between the two works.

The Works: Emotional Tone

Another essential part of the *Duineser Elegien* as a work is what we might call the atmosphere or emotional tone. As a textual medium, this emotional tone is shaped entirely through the text, specifically its content. This accordingly identifies the elegiac speaker as the one responsible for this atmosphere, as the *Elegies* is mediated entirely from this perspective and everything in the poems originates in the speaker's mind. My examination of the elegiac speaker has already characterized the speaker's musings as pessimistic and despairing. The emotional tone of the *Elegies* mirrors these despondent thoughts, resulting in a bleak and hopeless atmosphere.

Unlike its source poems, *Der Himmel über Berlin* is not restricted to text and uses the allowances of its medium to convey its atmosphere both visually and aurally. Due to their frequency, the voiceovers largely determine the emotional tone of the film. As these voiceovers give insight to the speaker's thoughts at moment of difficulties, these thoughts are stressed and troubled; the film's tone is correspondingly gloomy and hopeless. These

voiceovers are also spoken in a flat monotone, aurally contributing to the film's dreary tone. The film also uses music to this effect. The film's score is comprised mainly of forlorn stringed instruments playing haunting and melancholic melodies, which alternate between piercingly high and deep and somber. These instruments often play alone or with minor accompaniment, allowing their solitariness to reflect and underscore that of the humans. Last, the film uses black-and-white to visually contribute to the depressing atmosphere. Black-and-white denotes which scenes are from the angels' perspective, but the lack of color also visually depresses the viewer and suggests that human existence is bleak and without vibrancy. In these ways, the film uses the full allowances of its medium to establish a grim and despondent tone or atmosphere.

Here, we see how each text uses the specific allowances of its respective medium, but ultimately produce a similarly somber, hopeless atmosphere. This initial atmosphere importantly sets the stage for an emotional arc that will span and is central to both works–– which I will examine more closely in the following section.

The Works: Change in Emotional Tone

As established, the *Elegies*'s emotional atmosphere is shaped by the speaker's grim assessment of human existence. An essential component of this assessment is the angel, as the speaker uses these superhuman figures as a metric to judge the worth of human endeavors and existence. In the seventh elegy, for example, the speaker considers the monuments of human existence, like the sphinx, religious cathedrals, and love. However, the speaker does not state the worth of these items, but rather asks the Angel to corroborate his reluctant hopes: "O Engel, er war es,— / groß, auch noch neben dir?" and then, referring to a woman in love, "reichte sie dir ans Knie—?" (Rilke 44). Here,

"neben" and the reference to the angel's knee creates a mental image of the human next to the angel, demonstrating how the speaker judges their worth side by side. Their worth is physically represented by their unequal sizes, further supported when the speaker calls the angel "du Großer" (Rilke 44). This also suggests the human can never live up to the angel— even the woman in love can at most only reach the angel's knee. In addition, the em dash conveys the speaker's halting uncertainty. The speaker lacks the confidence to make an assertion, instead craving the confirmation of the superior form of existence. By using the angel as a basis to determine human worth, the speaker reveals their desire to "reach beyond the limits of the human world to the transcendent realm of the angels" (Komar 25). However, because it is impossible for the human to transcend these intrinsic limitations, using the angel as a metric of comparison only dooms the human to a position of inferiority.

Because the speaker's critical opinion of human existence stems from comparing the human to the angel, the speaker's rejection of this comparison causes their assessment of human life, and accordingly the poems' emotional tone, to change. This transition takes places as the speaker recognizes what they had identified as the flaws of human existence are also its unique privileges. In particular, the speaker realizes that human struggles are a source of creativity. This change is demonstrated in the final elegy's opening stanza:

> Daß ich dereinst, an dem Ausgang der grimmigen Einsicht,
> Jubel und Ruhm aufsinge zustimmenden Engeln.
> Daß von den klar geschlagenen Hämmern des Herzens
> keiner versage an weichen, zweifelnden oder
> reißenden Saiten. Daß mich mein strömendes Antlitz
> glänzender mache; daß das unscheinbare Weinen
> blühe. O wie werdet ihr dann, Nächte, mir lieb sein,
> gehärmte. Daß ich euch knieender nicht, untröstliche Schwestern

hinnahm, nich in euer gelöstes
Haar mich gelöster ergab. Wir, Vergeuder der Schmerzen.
Wie wir sie absehn voraus, in die traurige Dauer,
Ob sie nicht enden vielleicht. Sie sind ja
Unser winterwähriges Laub, unser dunkeles Sinngrün,
eine der Zeiten des heimlichen Jahres—, nicht nur
Zeit—, sind Stelle, Siedelung, Lager, Boden. Wohnort. (Rilke 58)

In contrast to the excerpt in the preceding paragraph, this stanza neither poses any questions nor even mentions the angels. This reveals that the speaker no longer needs the angel's approval and can now confidently make their own assertions. The speaker specifically states the value of the human struggles by connecting grief, beauty, and creativity. The speaker describes how their tears make them "glänzender" and relates sorrow to growth and creation through natural imagery. Their weeping is described as "blooming" and human afflictions are called "Laub" and "unser dunkeles Sinngrün." By relating these sorrows to plant life, the speaker suggests these sorrows are not mere difficulties to overcome, but rather hold the potential to create something beautiful, like a blooming flower. Consequently, avoiding struggles and hardships forfeits the benefits that arise from these difficulties. Further, as these struggles are unique to human experience, so are these benefits only a human privilege. Together this suggests that avoiding or rejecting human difficulties is misguided and results in a tragic loss of a unique privilege of human existence.

The elegiac speaker in the *Duineser Elegien* ultimately asserts that the "blooming flower" of these struggles is the human capacity for creativity. This is first suggested by an allusion to the poet Gaspara Stampa (Rilke 6), who is widely considered the Italian Renaissance's best female poet. Notably, many of her most highly-regarded poems were inspired by a troubled romantic relationship with Collaltino di Collalto (Korn), who did

not reciprocate the depth of her feelings; her works recount an "unrequited passion for a count" (Panizza et al.). The allusion to this historical figure subtly demonstrates how misfortune, here the anguish of unrequited feelings, inspires creativity. The speaker supports this conclusion in the ninth elegy, writing: "wie selbst das klagende Leid rein zur Gestalt sich entschließt" (Rilke 56). This comment alludes to the elegies themselves; the speaker's own misery is channeled into the creation of a body of poems. These brief instances importantly reveal how human anguish sparks creativity, resulting in the creation of art, poems, stories, and more.

Having realized the worth of struggle and grief, the speaker regrets their earlier condemnation of this aspect of human existence. The speaker imagines how things might have been different if they received, rather than rejected, this grief. However, the speaker then moves from using "ich" to "wir" to accuse all humans of being "Vergeuder der Schmerzen." Collectively, humans make the error of only awaiting the end of difficult emotions, preventing us from taking advantage of their creative potential, thereby "wasting" them. Importantly, this stanza references the struggles that define human experience, but the speaker no longer laments these difficulties themselves, instead only their response to them. This acutely demonstrates that the nature of human existence has not changed, but the speaker's perspective of it has drastically shifted. In her text, *Transcending Angels: Rainer Maria Rilke's Duino Elegies*, Kathleen Komar succinctly describes this change: "… Rilke too will shift toward a rejection of the project of transcendence, and the tenth elegy will embrace as a creative force precisely the painful characteristics of life that the elegy traditionally seeks to escape" (27). Here, "rejection of the project of transcendence" describes how the speaker rejects the impossible task of

living up to the angelic figures to instead embrace the trials and tribulations of human existence.

The realization that causes this shift in tone is ultimately the *Elegies*' central theme: the difficulties that mark human life are also the unique benefits of human existence. The human bond with time brings suffering and death into our mortal lives, but also bestows humans with a unique and highly desirable creative power. The shift in the *Elegies*' emotional tone reveals how deeply this revelation has changed the speaker's outlook on human existence. The *Elegies* newfound confident and optimistic tone mirrors how the speaker themselves now views life with hope and recognizes it as a privilege to be enjoyed, rather than a cross to bear. In summary, the film's emotional arc follows the speaker's gradual shift in perspective, ultimately resulting in the realization that the aspects of human existence they had previously lamented are simultaneously the unique advantages of being human.

Der Himmel über Berlin's emotional trajectory is equally central to the work, as the angel Damiel's decision to become human causes the atmosphere to morph from gloomily despondent to vital and hopeful. Before investigating this change, however, it is necessary to understand the motives for Damiel's choice. Like the *Elegies*, the film focuses on the relationship between human and angel but imagines the angelic perspective on these different forms of existences. The angels in *Der Himmel über Berlin* are also similarly superhuman. They are immortal and have witnessed all of earthly and human history. They can read minds— it is through their perspective that the film's many voiceovers are mediated. They can also fly; the film is scattered with soaring black-and-white shots over Berlin's cityscape, whose lack of color marks them as from an angel's

perspective. Last, the angels exist beyond the realm of human existence and perception. They are invisible to humans (children are the one intriguing exception to this rule) and lack any physical existence. In a telling scene, Damiel picks up a pencil, but the pencil he holds is only a shadowy phantom of the actual, earthly pencil, which remains as though untouched (Wenders, *Der Himmel Über Berlin* 0:19:34). This scene concisely shows the distance that separates angels from physical worldly existence; while they can observe the physical human world, they cannot partake. In these ways, the angels within *Der Himmel über Berlin* are characterized as powerful superhuman beings.

However, the angels feel neither superior nor indifferent to the humans around them but are instead deeply emotionally connected to their mortal counterparts. *Der Himmel über Berlin*'s angels are consumed by the lives of humans; their angelic duty consists of witnessing events on earth, which means closely observing its inhabitants, namely: humans. However, their involvement extends beyond mere duty; the angels are personally invested in human lives. Throughout the film, the angels use their power to relieve certain individuals of their suffering. In one scene, Damiel prompts a dying man to spend his final moments remembering moments of beauty, rather than mulling over regrets (Wenders, *Der Himmel Über Berlin* 0:36:32). In another, he renews a man's faith in his ability to overcome obstacles that seemed, only moments before, unsurmountable (0:23:37). Because these acts stem not from obligation but rather from the angel's volition, they reveal the angels' personal investment in human life. This is most clearly demonstrated when the angel Cassiel fails to prevent a suicide. As the man pushes himself off the edge of a building, Cassiel turns away and releases a tormented cry (Wenders, *Der Himmel Über Berlin* 1:08:58). This anguish reveals the striking depth of

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the angel's emotional investment in human life, which here extends even beyond the man's. The man has decided his life is not worth continuing, but Cassiel clearly disagrees, demonstrating how the angels see the worth of human life, even when humans themselves do not. Wenders himself said: "the angels would … see us in such a loving way that one could not even imagine it" (Martinec 171), describing the angels' inconceivably deep emotional bond with humans, a bond based in millennia of devoted attention. In short, the angels believe deeply in the worth of human existence, sometimes even more than humans themselves.

Beyond merely appreciating human existence, however, some angels actually desire this existence over their own. While the angels are endowed with certain powers, their existence still leaves much to be desired. Damiel, the main angel, openly expresses his growing fatigue with his "ewige[n] geistige[n] Existenz" (Wenders, *Der Himmel Über Berlin* 0:13:27). Here, his two-word description concisely reveals the most fundamental characteristics of angelic existence: being eternal and being immaterial. These traits prevent Damiel from enjoying the simple pleasures of time-bound, physical existence: eating a meal, feeding the cat, reading the newspaper, even the sensation of being ill. While modest, the unavailability of these satisfactions makes them particularly desirable to the angels. It is also important to note the film's initially bleak emotional atmosphere actually reflects the experience of being an angel— this part of the movie is almost entirely in black-and-white, identifying it as an angelic perspective. Angels may have superhuman powers, but their existence is colorless and somber and they are relentlessly exposed to the despondent thoughts of the humans around them.

However, the human ability that Damiel most desires and that finally prompts him to reject his angelic existence is the ability to create narrative. An essential component of narrative is time, which allows events to be chronologically and causally connected toward a certain end (Chandler and Munday). However, the immaterial angels are stagnant and unchanging; while they see the effects of time, time does not actually affect them. Their incorporeality thus prevents them from creating narrative. In contrast, humans are closely bound to narrative and storytelling, an association most overtly made through the character of Homer. An old man, Homer's own name alludes to the famous Greek epic writer and promptly connects him to the human tradition of storytelling. He strengthens this association by calling himself humanity's storyteller (Wenders, *Der Himmel Über Berlin* 0:40:51). Visually, Homer's weak and aged body strikingly contrasts with the angels' timelessness and connects Homer's physical existence, his mortality, and his creative ability. In fact, "ability" does not fully encapsulate the human connection to narrative; it is not only that Homer *can* create narratives, he *must*. Homer muses how even without an audience, even "mit einer brüchigen Stimme … [hebt] die Erzählung immer noch an aus [seiner] Tiefung" (0:21:55). Here, "Tiefung" references the fundamental nature of this creative ability. Homer is powerless to resist this need, regardless of his growing physical weakness or the lack of listeners. This quote demonstrates the inextricable link between human existence and narrative creation, which Damiel longs for; having only been able to witness the unfolding of other narratives, he yearns to finally create his own.

Der Himmel über Berlin's emotional tone changes when Damiel leaves his limited angelic existence to enjoy the privileges of being human, namely, to create his

own narrative. The moment of his change is marked by the introduction of color, which visually imparts that Damiel is no longer an angel. Lying on the ground by the Berlin wall, Damiel is abruptly awoken when a chest plate falls on his head, seemingly from a helicopter hovering above. In response to this violent entry into the human world, Damiel smiles and laughs. A few moments later, as he strides away, armor in hand, Damiel reaches up and touches his head. A look of perplexed awe crosses his face as he pulls his hand away, discovering blood on his fingers. He brings his blood-covered hand to his mouth and a smile crosses his face as he remarks simply, "schmecke" (Wenders, *Der Himmel Über Berlin* 1:33:39). He then asks a stranger to name the color of his blood, as well as the other items in the area. The scene closes as Damiel marches off, remarking in passing to a man painting the wall, "Schön!" (1:34:56).

This scene demonstrates key aspects of Damiel's entrance into the human world and marks a quick and decided shift of the film's emotional tone. Notably, the scene is saturated with sensation. In a few short moments, Damiel experiences pain, color, and taste. His joy at finally experiencing these sensations is clearly evinced by his smiles and laughter. The joy within this scene, the introduction of color, and the important absence of depressing voiceovers or music immediately lighten the film's emotional tone. Having spent a millennium watching but not partaking in human existence, Damiel is thrilled and his satisfaction sets the mood of the film as it continues, changing the atmosphere from bleak to animated and hopeful.

Damiel's march into the streets of the Berlin is arguably the most important aspect of this scene, due to what is suggests about Damiel's new existence. Damiel is no longer bound to wander aimlessly around Berlin, but now moves with a direction and

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purpose of his own choosing: to find Marion, the human woman he has fallen in love with. Here, Damiel partakes in and points to another essential aspect of human existence. It is not only valuable because it allows for the creation of narratives within literature or art, but human experience is more fundamentally defined by being able to *live* narratives, to shape our lives' trajectory according to our own desires and determination. This is its most basic advantage.

Der Himmel über Berlin converges on this point. The voiceovers and emotional arc ultimately demonstrate the value of humans' ability to create and live narratives, which is a privilege not accessible to all forms of existence. This privilege relies on human's physicality and connection to time, which is necessary for the creation of narrative. By following Damiel's decision to become human, the film thereby reveals an essential characteristic of human existence which often goes unnoticed and consequently undervalued: the human ability to create narratives within their lives.

Final Assessment: The Third Work

Having closely examined the key components of each text as an individual work, we can explore the ways in which they engage with each other to ultimately present a third, unique work. A first important engagement between these two works centers on the limitations of different forms of existence. The *Duineser Elegien*'s single isolated speaker laments the limitations of being human and envies other forms of existence. But the angels in *Der Himmel über Berlin*'s similarly desire what is inaccessible to them, revealing a major oversight of the elegiac speaker: the speaker forgets that angelic existence is, or at least might also be limited— simply in different ways. Here, *Der Himmel über Berlin* shares the *Elegies*' preoccupation with the restrictions of existence

but rewrites it (to use Leitch's terminology) to emphasize the frustrating limitations of angelic existence, thereby asserting that *all* forms of existence have shortcomings. However, as the elegiac speaker eventually recognizes that the limitations of human life are also its benefits, the two works together make this assertion: every form of existence has unique limitations, which are simultaneously its own special privileges. Here, we see how *Der Himmel über Berlin,* by rewriting the idea of limited forms of existence, presents a counterpoint that is unanticipated by the source poems, thereby complicating and enriching themes originally found within the *Duineser Elegien.*

A second pivotal conversation between the two works concentrates on the role of time within human existence. The elegiac speaker argues that time fundamentally shapes human experience and is the root cause of all human struggles. Consequently, when they realize how these struggles inspire creativity, the speaker reassesses the human connection to time as a unique and deeply desirable aspect of human existence. In *Der Himmel über Berlin*, the angels openly describe the benefits available to a time-bound, corporeal form, particularly the joys of physical sensation, whether painful or pleasant. The film also associates the human connection to time with creative potential, but rewrites this theme as well; the film identifies this creativity as the ability and privilege to create narratives in one's life, to live narrative trajectories of one's own determination. Thus, while the works both address time's role within human existence, the film rewrites this concept, thereby elaborating on and complicating the source text. For this reason, considering the two works together ultimately leads to a more nuanced understanding of how time essentially defines and shapes human existence.

Ultimately, we see that the works enrich each other and collectively draw conclusions that do not exist within each independent work, but only arise when considering them together. Here we find the elusive third work. I describe it in this way: *Der Himmel über Berlin* is aware of the difficulties of human existence but doesn't openly identify these struggles as a desirable aspect of human existence, instead emphasizing other, separate values: simple physical sensation and the ability to live narratively. In contrast, the *Duineser Elegien* boldly asserts the value of suffering, thereby appreciating human existence even in the moments when it is most difficult to do so. Together, the conversation between these works give rise to a third work that contains and conveys a wholistic understanding of the privileges of human existence—artistic creativity, the power of narrative self-determination, physical sensation— while simultaneously asserting that truly appreciating human existence must extend beyond merely appreciating the good, but also understanding, accepting, and savoring the *bad*.

Conclusion

In these two case studies, I have demonstrated how Bazin's theory of adaptation provides a metric which can helpfully guide the investigation of certain film adaptation but is ultimately too limited to tackle more complex adapted works. My analysis of *Er ist Wieder Da* demonstrated how Bazin's emphasis of similarities functions well for straightforward film adaptations, whose resemblances to their source texts offer ample commonalties to be examined. However, the lack of attention given to the differences between the source text and adapted film resulted in overlooking how the work's political message is conveyed with varying effectiveness. Within *Er ist Wieder Da* in particular, whose political message is highly germane to the contemporary political atmosphere in Germany and beyond, it matters if and how readers or viewers engage with this central idea. In this way, my first case study still pointed to the limitations of Bazin's methodology, prompting me to modify it to respond to these flaws.

I transformed Bazin's theory by incorporating Leitch's theory of rewriting, which removed Bazin's basis in fidelity theory and consequently eliminated its restrictiveness. The notion of rewriting reasserts the value and importance of difference by suggesting such differences are the instances when the film is most critically engaged with the source text, as in these moments it reimages, complicates, enhances, or otherwise responds to ideas or themes within the source work. Supported by this idea, my methodology includes these differences within the overall study of adaptation by considering each text its own work. Regarding each text as their own redirects focus away from the similarities that may or may not exist between them, allowing us to also examine the differences which make each respective work its own unique entity. By

recognizing and analyzing these variations, this approach eliminates the risk of disregarding essential components of each work, as Bazin's method unfortunately does. The two works can thus be comprehensively understood in and of themselves before they are finally considered together. In this final step, we consider how these texts engage in conversation with each other and identify an entirely third work, which only exists or arises in the engagement between the two works. As in Bazin's original theory, the work at the pyramid's peak is not a physical entity; however, unlike in Bazin, this work is entirely new and cannot be found fully-formed within each individual work.

Bazin's original theory was wholly under-equipped to handle the complexity of my second test case: the adaptation of Rilke's *Duineser Elegien* and Wenders' *Der Himmel über Berlin*. However, by altering Bazin's methodology, I was able to productively study these two works independently as well how they converse with each other. After this step, as outlined by my theory, I then effectively identified a unique third work that arose from this conversation, which presented a wholistic comprehension of the privileges and disadvantages of human existence. The fruitfulness of this investigation proves the success of my alterations and ultimate effectiveness of my new proposed theory.

My methodology is an expansion of Bazin's in a number of ways. First, by eliminating the emphasis of similarities, my theory is not restricted by a foundation in fidelity theory. Second, while my method refuses to prioritize similarities, it does still recognize them. For this reason, it actually encompasses within it the potential and abilities of Bazin's theory, while also going further to recognize interpretations his theory does not allow for. Finally, my methodology achieves the analytic depth that is necessary

to recognize the complex individuality of each singular work but also allows the identification of a more nuanced relationship between the source text and the adapted film— a nuanced relationship that culminates in the third work. In addition, as this work arises out of engagement between the texts, this approach encourages analytic engagement on behalf of the researcher; this third work is not self-evident, but must be actively sought. My methodology thus promotes the nuanced yet wholistic understanding of the two works as individuals, as well as a comprehensive grasp of their connection. This emphasis on both breadth and depth makes my theory equipped to tackle adaptations of broadly ranging intricacy— as reflected by its fruitful investigation of my two very different case studies. In summary, my intervention results in a theory that is both highly inclusive and highly productive.

Having proposed a new methodology with which to consider film adaptations, my thesis clearly holds consequences for the field of adaptation studies, as well as both film and literature studies. Simply put, I propose here a new way to approach the investigation of film adaptations, but more importantly a new way to think about film adaptation itself. My method continues to distance academic investigation of film adaptations from fidelity and pushes for deeper analysis of the engagement between adapted films and their source texts. By demonstrating the intricacy of the relationship between text and film, my investigation also potentially reorients conceptions of film adaptation within both film studies and literature studies, within which the issue of adaptation often remains on the fringes. Doing so, my thesis might encourage more engagement between these two different fields. Last, my thesis also encourages popular audiences and film critics, who

are often still enamored with the idea of "faithfulness," to consider and appreciate film adaptation beyond this prevalent but narrow conception.

My thesis' use of German texts to make an argument about the theory of film adaptation exemplifies both the interdisciplinarity that is characteristic of German Studies and the fruitfulness of bringing together a variety of academic areas. Doing so, I demonstrate how German texts are not only significant within German culture, history, or German Studies as a distinct academic field, but can also make valuable contributions to other disciplines. By approaching film adaptation with an emphasis on culture, which is prevalent in German Studies, we avoid the dangerous biases towards literature that accompany an approach stemming from Literary Studies. These reasons reveal why it is essential for German texts to be included within a broad range of academic discourses, particularly those where they may have been overlooked. Within this context, my thesis represents another step in the ongoing move to assert German Studies' significance as an interdisciplinary endeavor.

However, the significance of my thesis extends even beyond these realms, as the basic ideas espoused here are also relevant entirely beyond the context of film adaptation. At its most basic and abstract level, the study of adaptation is merely the process of examining the relationship between things. In film adaptation, these entities are connected by virtue of one being a conscious adaptation of the original source text. However, my methodology could hypothetically guide the investigation of relationships between any number of entities and, importantly, regardless of any intentional link between them. Above all, my thesis encourages nuance, depth, and analytical engagement— none of which are in any way exclusive to film adaptation itself.

Consequently, by investigating these German film adaptations, my thesis more

fundamentally promotes principles that are essential to a comprehensive understanding of

the many intricate relationships and connections that fill and constitute the very world

around us.

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