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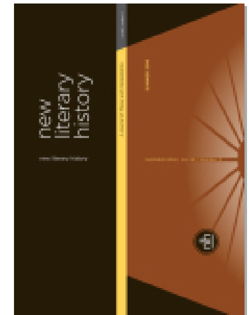

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Great Expectations: Cinematic Adaptations and the Reader's Disappointment

Julian Hanich

> That's how fiction works . . . it turns readers into casting directors (and production designers), which is why fans can become irate when a screen adaptation doesn't look like the book that played in their heads.
>
> —Manohla Dargis[1]

Why are readers of novels so frequently disappointed, even indignant about film adaptations?[2] What are the reasons for the often heard complaint "I prefer the book!"? And why does it seem outright impossible for many readers to get rid of this negative experience, despite years of scholarship in adaptation studies addressing the specific intermedial characteristics of novels-turned-into-films?[3] This essay explores the grounds for such reader dissatisfaction, focusing on filmed versions of illusion-creating novels, which make up a large portion of film adaptations. I will do so by presenting a psychological hypothesis on what I consider the most common reason for reader disappointment when watching a film adaptation. I support this hypothesis with a comparative media phenomenology and reception aesthetics.

My considerations of these cases of disappointment should not, of course, be equated with a wrong-headed claim that adaptations that leave the reader fully satisfied do not exist. However, in what follows, the sources of the reader-turned-viewer's dissatisfaction are of primary concern. By no means does this essay indicate that literature is overall better, richer, deeper, aesthetically more valuable, or whatever other kind of aesthetic judgments might be in circulation, than film. Nor is it intended as an argument in favor of a normative hierarchy of high culture over popular culture. Its focus is simply a widespread psychological phenomenon in need of explanation.

Those who dismiss the familiar sense of disappointment in the face of filmed novels by pointing out that many adapation scholars have debunked the issue of "fidelity," and that we are dealing with two very

different media, which should not be compared to one another, are guilty of a blasé connoisseurship. To quote adaptation scholar Brian McFarlane, "There is not much point in merely insisting that a film is a film, whether or not it is adapted from a literary source, and that the latter is of no consequence when it comes to our response to the film."[4] As media studies scholars we should engage popular misconceptions. Indeed, we should try to explain them with the means available to us. The debates over "fidelity" aside, here I want to shed light on the undeniable *emotional* phenomenon of disappointment connected to the great expectation of "fidelity."[5] Even Robert Stam, who sets out to show the aporias of the term, admits that it retains "a grain of experiential truth."[6]

It is often assumed that an adaptation represents a frustrating abbreviation and abridgement, presenting us with only a summary or a "film digest," in the words of André Bazin.[7] While actor Ulrich Noethen's German audiobook version of *War and Peace* takes sixty-seven hours, King Vidor's film version from 1956 lasts only three-and-a-half hours. Obviously, there is nothing wrong with this quantitative argument: as readers-turned-spectators, we are often frustrated because the film does not have room to include personally important figures, locations, or events, and thus offers us *too little*.

And yet there is also an argument that, in a certain sense, has to do with a *too different* dimension of the adaptation. Readers to whom a specific illusion-creating novel is important, and who have grown fond of it, have a tendency to want the film to look (and sound) as they imagine the world of the text to be—or better, as they *remember* having imagined it. Let's call this the *wish for congruence*. As Joy Gould Boyum nicely puts it, readers often expect "the movie projected on the screen to be a shadow reflection of the movie . . . [they] have imagined."[8] Or, in the words of Christian Metz: "The reader of the novel, following the characteristic and singular paths of his desire, has already gone through a whole process of clothing the words he has read in images, and when he sees the film, he would like to find the same images (in fact to *see it again* . . .)."[9] When viewers ask for "fidelity" to the novel, it is often not a question of valuing literature more than film, but a wish for congruence with what they, quite literally, had in mind. Where does this wish originate? Why would one want to have one's personally imagined version of the novel repeated in audivisual form? Isn't it a flagrant case of narcissism when readers expect their own concretization to become the norm for a film?

Here it helps to tie the wish for congruence to the reader's *desire for recognition*. In phenomenological aesthetics, a widely shared assumption holds that the *work of art*—say, a novel—is interspersed with spots of indeterminacy and blanks and therefore needs to be completed, con-

cretized, and actualized by a reader who—through this very constituting activity—turns it into an *aesthetic object*. "This is creative behavior," Roman Ingarden claims.[10] When readers effectively co-create the aesthetic object, they do so in very personal ways; during the act of reading they transfer parts of their own interiority onto the book.[11] Yet seeing an adaptation on the screen means being confronted with another concretization of the novel. When this concretization corresponds to and thus confirms the reader's own concretization, this process can imply an aesthetic recognition: an intersubjective acknowledgment of what the reader has conjured up mentally while reading. In turn, if the adaptation translates the imagined world of the novel into a very different and irrefutably public form, the reader's own concretization may be threatened. A major reason for the sense of disappointment with filmed literature, at least with adaptations of illusion-creating novels, may be located precisely here, in the denial of the reader's desire for recognition, an important term in social and political theory that has more recently also sparked interest in aesthetics. (I will come back to the problem of recognition in more detail below.) This psychological hypothesis is closely linked to an aspect aptly captured by the phenomenological expression "mineness": the aesthetic object of the novel, which I concretize and co-create while reading, together with the physical object of the book, which I hold in my hand, lend themselves to being felt as more fundamentally something of *mine* than the subsequent adaptation on the cinema screen. This amplified sense of mineness psychologically complicates the experience of accepting and appreciating the adaptation.

I. Prerequisites: Comparing, Connecting, Coming First

Before delving into a discussion of what the terms "mineness" and "recognition" imply for the overall argument of this essay, let us first consider some crucial prerequisites for why the reader may be disappointed in the first place.

A prime prerequisite is the urge to compare the film with the book. Those who approach filmed literature not just as a *film*, but precisely as an *adaptation*, cannot avoid engaging in such comparisons, as Paisley Livingston has pointed out. If we want to retain the widespread category "adaptation" and assess certain types of adaptation in aesthetic terms, the comparison between the book and the film is logically unavoidable: "The very category of adaptations designates works that are meant to retain recognizable elements of a literary source. It follows that if a given adaptation is to be appreciated as a successful instance of adaptation,

we should ask in what sense it has (and has not) remained faithful to the source, at least in the sense of presenting characteristic features belonging to the same type as those of the source."[12]

And yet the comparison is not only logically unavoidable, but also psychologically likely when the reader feels somehow connected to the book; this closeness and fondness becomes a second prerequisite for disappointment. We can posit that most readers who watch a filmed novel for the aspect of adaptation do so because they like, appreciate, treasure, honor, or even love the book. A reader who read a book with no interest or even hated it would rarely make the effort to see the film *because* the book was filmed. (An exception are literature students who have to watch an adaptation during class and who may well lack an affective tie to the novel. Or think of a film critic who, for professional reasons, must watch the film as an adaption.) Meanwhile, readers who do not have previous ties to the novel may simply watch the film for whatever reason. In so doing, they might experience their own disappointments, but these are not based on the categorization of film as an adaptation.

Most readers-turned-spectators therefore approach the film version with curiosity or excitement. They might anticipate certain moments they especially enjoyed in the novel. Maybe they are looking forward to the possibility of making a renewed "contact" with their favorite characters, in the sense of a parasocial interaction.[13] Most importantly, as argued above, they may expect the world of the film to look (and sound) like the one they have mentally constructed during the act of reading. At issue is thus a very special form of reception: the viewing of the filmed version is "filtered" through these expectations, and in a certain sense also constrained by them. That a film should completely confirm one's own concretization is, of course, an illusory expectation. Joseph M. Boggs correctly writes: "We generally approach such films with completely unreasonable expectations."[14] Boggs sums up the resulting frustrations with an illuminating comparison: "In a sense, we have the same reaction to many film adaptations that we might have toward a friend whom we haven't seen for a long time and who has changed greatly over the intervening years. Mentally prepared to meet an old friend, we meet a stranger and take the changes as personal affront."[15]

The book as friend: this well-known comparison is particularly useful for our case. Katja Mellmann traces the close interweaving of reader and book back to the introduction to Goethe's *The Sufferings of Young Werther*, where a fictional editor suggests that the reader befriend the book: "The suggestion of a friendship attributes the book the status of a quasi-person, and in so doing indicates a new social relevance of literature, that goes beyond the communication of knowledge and formulating problems.

The book is not just a medium of communication, but also a partner in communication and socially generated communicated message."[16] Keith Oatley similarly argues that "the best metaphor for our relationship with a fictional story is friendship. Friends affect us. They change us. And just as we are careful whom we choose as friends . . . so we are careful what we read and what literary characters, or what narrators, we become mentally involved with."[17] And does not the much-maligned notion of "fidelity" metaphorically move the adaptation close to friendship, and romantic love, and thus refer back to the close bond of the reader to the original text?[18]

This affectionate bond is also revealed *ex negativo*, for instance when film adaptations are avoided precisely out of a fear of disappointment. For just this reason, to offer a few personal examples, I have decided against watching the film versions of E. Annie Proulx's *The Shipping News* (2001), Philip Roth's *The Human Stain* (2003) and Jonathan Safran Foer's *Everything Is Illuminated* (2005). I was afraid that my own concretizations of these novels, which have become dear to me in the act of reading, would not be shared by those responsible for the films. But the apprehension goes even further: "The fear also stems from the power the physical presence of a technical picture has to neutralize the imagination and replace its images: when talking about a book, we remember pictures of its adaptation and sometimes we simply don't know *if we've read or seen something*," Hajnal Király claims.[19] The film adaptation provides a concreteness and fullness of depiction that powerfully counters the very personal and fragile visual imagining of the book—so much so that it often seems to "overwrite" our memories of the novel. Andreas Kilb goes so far as to compare the film adaptation to a vampire: "It sucks the images out of our fantasy and replaces it with its own ones."[20]

Conversely, the strong attachment to the book can also be interpreted as a form of captivity or imprisonment, limiting one's freedom as a film viewer. Out of the fear of being disappointed by the filmed version and losing my original attachment to the novel by way of the film adaptation, I have avoided three films with promising constellations: Julianne Moore performing with Cate Blanchett (*The Shipping News*), Anthony Hopkins as a light-skinned African American (*The Human Stain*), and Liev Schreiber in his directing debut (*Everything Is Illuminated*).

What adaptation scholars take as a given thus turns out to be a considerable challenge: the ability to view the film adaptation of a treasured book without great expectations presupposes a high degree of detachment and media competence. Moreover, the reader-turned-viewer needs to be aware of this competence while watching the film. One would have to keep telling oneself that, *yes*, the film does not just take something

away from the novel, but also adds something to it (Morris Beja).[21] *No*, the novel is not a mere copy of the film; it is a particular interpretation, and the relationship is one of hypertext to hypotext (Robert Stam).[22] *Yes*, sure, there are films that demand more of the spectator and in fact are better than the book (Brian McFarlane).[23] *No*, it does not make sense to compare the film to the book as a whole but only to analogous parts, for instance with an eye to how the author and director solve a certain narrative problem in their respective media (Livingston).[24] But does it sound overly elitist to claim that most spectators will not be able to take this professional view, especially the first time they watch an adaptation? It can be difficult for many of us to remain aloof, and even an adaptation theorist like McFarlane doesn't seem optimistic: "It may be that, even among the most rigorously high-minded of film viewers confronted with the film version of a cherished novel or play, it is hard to suppress a sort of yearning for a faithful rendering of *one's own vision of the literary text*."[25] Of course, the opposition between the "naive" nonexpert and the professional media theorist is rather oversimplified. Just as we should posit a continuous spectrum between the two, we should also expect different degrees of reader disappointment.

And yet the reader's high hopes, so often shattered, are kept alive by the sheer possibility that a film *can* confirm one's own concretization and fulfill one's expectations. As a participant in an empirical study on Peter Jackson's *Hobbit* adapations put it: "Jackson had succeeded in transferring the reading experience into the world of film."[26] Livingston refers to even more excited viewers, quoted in Kristin Thompson's study of Jackson's *Lord of the Rings* films, where we find enthusiastic spectators raving about the films' closeness to the novels: "Some fans praised these films for having literally, captured their own mental images of Middle-Earth."[27] The relief and joy expressed in fan reactions to satisfactory adaptations confirm that we are dealing with something as cherished as it is unusual: film images that actually coincide with the viewers' own imagination, confirming rather than "overwriting" it.

A third precondition has yet to be mentioned. Trivially speaking, the wish for congruence is determined by the fact that I have read the literary text *first*; my concretization of the novel needs to be primary.[28] It is only because readers have first concretized the novel, imagined its world, and thereby potentially grown fond of it that the ensuing comparison of concretizations can be disappointing. However, as we will see presently, the reader's fondness of the novel is in important ways also tied to a heightened feeling of mineness.

II. The Amplified Sense of Mineness

When the reader is confronted with the filmed version of a literary work in the cinema, his or her affectionate attachment to the book often becomes particularly noticeable *in comparison* with the not-yet-existing attachment to the adaptation. Due to differing media reception constellations and varying acts of consciousness, I, as a spectator, tend to have a stronger sense of the *previously* read book as belonging to me, being concretized by me, being closer to me than the filmed version. These differing degrees of mineness are important: they complicate an easy appreciation of the adaptation (even though they certainly don't make it impossible).[29] To put it metaphorically: the act of reading has bound the book closely *to* me—that's why it is so difficult for the film adaptation to wrest it away *from* me.

But what is the basis for my claim that a prior act of concretization leads me to think of the aesthetic object of reading as being more "mine" than the film I watch in the cinema?[30]

1. The question of the intimacy of the medium.

When I enter the cinema to watch a new film version of a novel, I have already spent several hours, days, or perhaps even weeks with the book. The experience of reading a novel usually lasts much longer and is distributed over a longer span of time than the experience of watching the film, which is generally over after two hours. This fact alone is likely to result in an extended intimacy, further increased by the book's haptic quality. I carry the book through the city, to parks, to cafés, or on the train, or bring it with me to very intimate places like the bed or the bathtub. In brief: the book is my companion. It comes *with* me, while I have to come *to* the film. The book is something I have held for a long time and repeatedly in my hand; I have leafed back and forth between its pages, making marks in various places. Books as objects are more *palpable* than projected films that I am unable to touch—indeed, for various reasons I may not even want to touch them.[31]

In addition, we usually read a book alone, while the film is seen jointly in the cinema. The personal intimacy with the text, which was established with the emergence of the book and the suppression of oral culture, retreats in the cinema in favor of a collective reception.[32] Instead, the film is presented for all in the room at the same time. In a certain sense, the film is thus perceived as more *objective* than the read novel, because it can be viewed by everyone present.[33] Conversely, the product of my

reading is more *subjective* and seems to be more mine, simply because I concretize it in an intimate one-to-one relationship.

But here we can also sense why watching a satisfactory adaptation *with others* who are also thrilled by it can be so pleasurable: it seems to establish a strong bond because we find a confirmation and recognition not only of our individual concretization of the novel, but of our collective one. Or, to put it differently, an adaptation that others also find satisfactory grants aesthetic recognition not only through the film via its makers, but also through those who seem to have imagined the book in the same way we have. Elsewhere I have called this a collective *recognition of accord*: the reader-turned-viewer feels acknowledged as part of a group responding equally—in accordance—to an aesthetic object.[34]

2. The question of the freedom of decision vis-à-vis the medium.

There is a second media-determined difference: it has to do with the degree of my freedom of decision vis-à-vis the medium, especially with regard to duration, kind, and intensity of engagement. For Roland Barthes, the pleasure in the text lies in just this freedom that we have vis-à-vis the aesthetic object: "We don't read everything with the same reading intensity: a rhythm sets in, boldly, not very respectful of the integrity of the text; our desire to know leads us to pass over certain passages (that we most likely suspect to be 'boring') to find as quickly as possible the next focus of the anecdote." So it is up to the reader to resist the object and to approach it according to his own whim: "It is the very rhythm of what is read and what is not read that creates the pleasure of the great narratives . . . . I read on, I skip, I look up, I dip in again."[35] Hans Magnus Enzensberger, in his euphoric description of the freedom of reading, goes in a similar direction.[36]

When watching the adaption, this freedom seems reduced by the prescribed time of reception and the continuous projection of the film. Of course, this comparably passive sense of nonfreedom is a great source of pleasure in the usual cinema visit—the spectator can abandon himself to the film. In the case of the filmed novel this sense of diminished freedom can become conspicuous if we still have in mind our chosen reading rhythm, our own created intensity, our self-determined temporalities of the act of reading. Again, the comparison foregrounds the greater sense of mineness of the preceding act of reading.

However, two transformations in media use have made the acts of reading a book and watching a film more similar than they used to be. First, the difference begins to disappear when both media are consumed on

screens: the novel on the ebook reader and the film on the computer, or both on the very same tablet. Second, there are now many possibilities of active interaction with film that emerged with the VHS recorder, increased with the DVD player, and are today easily implemented with the computer: the ability to pause the flow of images, rewind and fast-forward, or start with certain chapters. In contrast to the film projected on a cinema screen, the DVD film is encountered with greater freedom. Laura Mulvey's term "possessive spectator" seems especially apt in this context, for it seems to refer to a greater sense of mineness in film spectatorship.[37]

How strongly these media changes affect experiences of disappointment with literary adaptations is something that remains to be seen. In two senses, skepticism is called for. On the one hand, many spectators see filmed literature for the first time in a cinema. On the other hand, even in media with greater freedom of choice (DVDs, computers), we might well ask how many spectators on first viewing—and these are the ones we are interested in here—actively intervene in the flow of images and take advantage of the new freedom of choice in terms of viewing the film.

3. The question of phenomenological proximity.

When I watch an adaptation, I look at the screen or monitor from a certain distance. Both are *in front of* me, and thus *outside* of me. In the cinema, the film is also far away. The filmic world is thus perceived as an external world even in moments of deep immersion. If we take Vivian Sobchack's film phenomenology seriously, then the spectator in the cinema is always directed to the "viewing view" of the film's body that presents us *its* perception of the world (via the technological apparatus of the camera). Watching a film, according to Sobchack, is equivalent to our own perception of somebody else's perception.[38] For the spectator this means that, between his or her perception of the world of the film, the perception of the film itself is inserted as a middle link.

While the book also lies in front of me, and thus outside of me, the concretization of the novel does not take place primarily in the mode of perception; in the act of reading, imagination has decidedly more weight. Yet objects and events of my reading imagination do not lie somewhere outside of me. They cannot be localized in an external world, but are projected, as it were, inside an intermediary space that exists neither outside me, nor really inside me.[39] Elsewhere I have pointed out that it would be phenomenologically wrong to speak of an "inner eye" or even

of "inner images."[40] I don't sense the mental visualizations of reading as *inside* me (even if they have a neuronal basis in my brain). Nevertheless, it is difficult to deny that in their intermediary space—phenomenologically—the visualizations are felt as *closer* to me (and thus more my own) than the perceived images of the film.

4. The question of the dependency of attention.

Philosophers such as Jean-Paul Sartre, Edward Casey, and Colin McGinn have pointed out that imagining is dependent on our attention. McGinn even writes that imagination is "greedy for attention."[41] Since what we imagine visually or auditorily only exists through our own attention, while reading we are always in the presence of what we ourselves co-created, directed by the text.[42] Take a passage from Cormac McCarthy's brilliant postapocalyptic novel *The Road*: "The snow fell nor did it cease to fall. He woke all night and got up and coaxed the fire to life again. . . . The snow whispered down in the stillness and the sparks rose and dimmed and died in the eternal blackness."[43] I need a high degree of attention to mentally visualize the "whispering down" of snow, the rise and dimming of sparks in the endless black of the night. In the same way, my auditive imagination of the "whispering down" of the snowfall, the sound of crackling captured by the verb "coaxing" in a virtually onomatopoeic way, and the degree to which I mentally hear the sparks due to the soft alliteration of "dim and die," depends on how closely I follow the sounds of the text. If my attention drifts away from the book, my imagined world dissipates in that very same moment.

The filmed version works differently. Of course, its concretization also crucially depends on my attention, but the transitions are less abrupt, occurring more gradually than they do in reading. Metaphorically speaking, reading a novel is like a light switch with an on/off function, while watching a film approximates a dimmer that allows for the gradual decrease or increase of levels of attention. If my thoughts are lost, or I look elsewhere, the film may no longer play a central role. Still, it remains—especially in the dark cinema—present on the edges of my field of consciousness, visually and especially acoustically. The act of visualizing the novel, in contrast, does not allow attention to focus on something else. This only seemingly contradicts point two, on the freedom of decision vis-à-vis the medium, because now I am talking about the act of mentally *visualizing* the world of the novel. Of course, I can always look up, stop reading, start daydreaming when holding a book in my hands, but these interruptions only reinforce the extent to

which my visualizing act depends on my attention. For instance, while reading I can jump back and forth between my visual *fantasy*, how it would be to live in a postapocalyptic world, and my visual *imagination* of the destroyed world of the novel—but I can scarcely do both things at the same time.

Now, these differences in our engagement with the two media are usually not important for our appreciation of either novels or films. However, in the special case of the film adapation of a beloved novel, where the preceding act of reading is implicitly or explicitly compared to the act of viewing the adaption, these differences contribute, again, to a greater degree of mineness. It seems as if my preceding concretization of the world of the novel were more dependent on me than my concretization of the world of the adaptation. Since the latter is less dependent on my attention—it is up there on the screen even if I partly concentrate on something else—it seems more objective and less mine.

5. *The question of a judgment of obviousness.*

Furthermore, philosophers from Sartre and Wittgenstein to Casey and McGinn have argued that imagination implies an evidence judgment and consequently cannot be false. As Sartre puts it, "When I say 'the object I perceive is a cube', I make a hypothesis that the later course of my perceptions may oblige me to abandon. When I say 'the object of which I have a [mental] image at this moment is a cube', I make here a judgment of obviousness: it is absolutely certain that the object of my image is a cube."[44] In other words, if I am subject to a perceptual illusion of a cube, a third-person perspective can point out this error to me, but I cannot myself identify the content of my *imagination* as false, since there is no third-person perspective on my imagination. My imagination thus cannot be false. In the act of reading, new information constantly causes us to modify and adjust *prior* imaginings, but that does not disqualify the prior imaginings as false; rather it promotes another, new act of imagination that in turn is not correctable, and so forth and so on.[45]

Moreover, imagination cannot be verified by somebody else. Casey writes: "Verifiability requires the possibility of intersubjective confirmation, and in imagining any such confirmation is excluded in the nature of the case. Presenting itself to the imaginer alone, imagining is ineluctably first-person in character."[46] We cannot have direct access to the imaginings of others, and indirect access is only possible by way of verbal descriptions. Now, film adaptations represent a special case because they are, as it were, an objectivized concretization. Some might

even consider this concretization to be the imagination of the filmmakers, realized as a perceptible film image.[47]

When I watch a film adaptation, my concretization of the text, previously assumed to be authoritative and binding, is drawn into doubt by the objectified concretization of the adaptation. Borrowing from Sartre, one could say that the adaptation contradicts my judgment of obviousness. I might well remain certain how the postapocalyptic world should be imagined in *The Road*. Nevertheless, I have to live with the fact that what seemed in a certain sense definite is now cast in doubt by the adaptation.

6. The question of personal imagination.

The sixth proposition is of the greatest importance: the discrepancy in the degree of mineness between the novel world *imagined* by me visually (and auditively) and the film world predominantly *perceived* by me visually (and auditively). Driven by the text, the former comes from an idiosyncratic reader imagination, while the latter is based to a high degree on the spectator's perception of moving images (even if imagination obviously plays an important role in film as well). Particularly in novels that invite a high level of visual (and auditive) imagining and that generate a high degree of personal attachment, the distinction must seem striking.[48]

For example, the first sentence in *The Road* reads as follows: "When he woke in the woods in the dark and the cold of the night he'd reach out to touch the child sleeping beside him."[49] While McCarthy simply uses the general personal pronoun "he" and the general noun "child," the director John Hillcoat in his adaptation from 2009 shows from the very beginning *this* specific man (played by Viggo Mortensen) and *this* specific child (embodied by Kodi Smit-McPhee). On the first pages of *The Road,* the father figure is referred to as such, but not described any further. We can then infer and envision certain things—the man is presumably older than thirty, dirty and gaunt. But whether and how we exactly imagine this man, how precisely we visualize his physiognomy and his clothing, is initially left up to us. In the cinema we immediately see just how old, dirty, gaunt, and bearded the man played by the actor Mortensen is. Thomas Leitch is, of course, right to point out that films and filmic characters leave lots of blanks to be filled in as well and therefore demand a high degree of imaginative involvement from their viewers: "The dauntingly rich visual field of films does not inhibit viewers' imagination, because imagining, as [Seymour] Chatman has

pointed out, cannot legitimately be reduced to 'picturing.'"[50] However, in the case of adaptations the primacy of the act of reading and the already visualized world of the novel make it seem as if the co-creating freedom of filling in visually and auditively has shrunk.

In any case, more decisive than the freedom to fill in the spots of indeterminacy is that the reader will imagine visually and auditively in a very personal way. In so doing, he or she takes recourse to schemata that feed on memories and experiences.[51] At the start of Franz Kafka's "Metamorphosis"—"One morning, when Gregor Samsa woke from troubled dreams, he found himself transformed in his bed into a horrible vermin"—every reader is forced to imagine the vermin in his or her own way: one person perhaps might imagine a bark-beetle, the other a garden spider, while a third reader might envision a cockroach.[52] In a film adaptation, the personal component of visualization shrinks, since the film usually makes a certain choice from the very start. Because in the former case the reader takes recourse to his or her own schemata, based on his or her personal memories and experiences, this results in a stronger impression of mineness than in the adaptation.

The discrepancy in terms of mineness becomes especially obvious to readers-turned-spectators when they are confronted with *evaluative* descriptions: if a text describes a figure as "pretty" or "ugly," each reader fills the passage with just those mental visualizations that *personally* correspond to the two adjectives.[53] In this way, *my* taste and *my* image of the beauty of Anna Karenina, Juliet Capulet, or Hester Prynne are expressed in my imagination. While a film certainly can correspond to our imaginations, this is often not the case: for one reader-turned-viewer it might be possible in the case of Greta Garbo as Anna Karenina, difficult in the case of Claire Danes as Juliet Capulet, and impossible in the case of Demi Moore as Hester Prynne.[54]

And finally, the modes of imagining a novel world and perceiving a film world are also different in their degree of visual concision and fullness. In the act of reading, we conjure the fictional world in a comparatively diffuse, incomplete, and chaotic way.[55] Our visual imagination is highly diffuse because we cannot visualize the "vermin" Gregor Samsa in *all* its details. Theodor A. Meyer referred to this point in his 1901 study *Das Stilgesetz der Poesie*: "Upon the first sounding of the word we limit ourselves to the most general, we grasp only so much of the object that we know is intended; everything more precise and particular, every more exact quality, remains under the threshold of consciousness. Not all characteristics of an object are equally significant, rather each object has characteristics that *appear* essential to us, without which we could not imagine the object."[56] Film images present us in contrast with

a comparable fullness of visual information about the makeup of the fictional world. Through the perception of the adaptation, the fictional world is thus comparatively dense, saturated, and coherently present.

"Film narrative possesses a plenitude of visual details, an excessive particularity compared to the verbal version, a plenitude aptly called by certain aestheticians visual 'over-specification,'" according to Chatman.[57] For the general spectator, this does not present a problem at all. On the contrary, visual plenitude is often a great source of pleasure in film. In the concrete situation of film adaptation, however, "over-specification" can run counter to the impression of mineness, for I can add comparatively less to the adaptation in my imagination.

Conversely, due to the over-specification of the filmic image, there is usually *more* to see than we can actually focus upon. This is true above all when the film directs our attention at a certain *part* of the image by way of the direction of the gaze and movements of the characters, through verbal clues, tracking shots and zooms, or sound accentuation, thus withdrawing our attention from other parts of the image. While imagining, in contrast, we miss nothing because we conjure the visual information on our own, led by the text. In imagining as well, there are naturally unfocused margins, but these are also self-generated.[58] Meyer refers to the "principle of the greatest saving of energy" in the act of imagining, which leads to only *individual traits* imagined—and in *succession*.[59] In the perception of the film image, in contrast, many more details are present all at once. Here too, a loss of mineness cannot be avoided, for the excess of what is not perceived in the filmed version latently shows that I am confronting a more objective form of visuality.

To sum up: the higher degree of specification, concision, and visual plenitude explains why the spectators in the film adaptation have less room to exercise their visual (and auditive) imagination and why, when confronted with the adaptation, the feeling of mineness sinks against the backdrop of the spectators' memories of reading. What I imagine personally in the act of reading, through concretization, is felt more strongly as something I co-created myself. (To repeat, claiming that the film spectator imagines *less* visually or auditively than the reader does not mean by any extent that he or she doesn't imagine at all. The film spectator's sensual activity of completion has variously occupied me elsewhere.)[60]

Let us return once again to the crucial temporal priority of reading. While concretizing a novel, the reader has already engaged in creative work before approaching the film adaptation. That is, he or she has developed an imagined world that is visual and auditive, but also haptic, olfactory, and gustatory. This imagined world was necessarily created

through idiosyncratic points of access: schemata acquired from our lifeworlds that are strongly rooted in memory. The concretization is thus based on a highly personal component that now plays a decisive role in comparison to the filmed version. While film certainly also relies on personal components to an important degree, these components are differently brought into play via the medium. And since the reading took place earlier, it has become the measure of all things.[61]

Against the background of these six propositions for a greater degree of mineness in the preceding concretization of a novel, it seems psychologically likely that satisfactory adapations will be rare cases—and that is why they are all the more surprising and pleasurable.

III. The Denial of Aesthetic Recognition

As we have seen, because the book is so important to them, many readers hope that the film adaptation will look (and sound) just as they remember having imagined it. The driving force for this wish for congruence is a desire for recognition, a term I now engage in more detail.

Recognition is an influential concept for social philosophers and political theorists like Axel Honneth, Charles Taylor, Nancy Fraser, and Paul Ricoeur. But this concept has more recently begun to interest literary and cultural studies scholars as well, particularly in the pages of *New Literary History* and in the work of Rita Felski and Winfried Fluck.[62] For Felski, recognition refers to the experience of a reader who, in the act of reading, has a flash of cognitive insight about him- or herself, which causes a personal readjustment: "I cannot help seeing traces of myself in the pages I am reading. Indisputably, something has changed; my perspective has shifted; I see something that I did not see before."[63] Recognition in this case leads to an act of self-scrutiny and better self-understanding. In Fluck's understanding, recognition comes closer to social distinction, the need for which grows, following Tocqueville, in egalitarian democratic societies in which recognition is no longer granted on the basis of social rank. On a textual level, Fluck finds the search for recognition in endlessly permutated stories of misrecognition and inferiority transformed into a triumphant recognition of the characters' worth.[64] On the level of aesthetic experience, these stories of recognition can become a source of recognition via self-extension: through a double-positioning in the act of reading (or viewing) the reader (or viewer) can remain him- or herself and become a triumphantly recognized character at the same time.

In my understanding, aesthetic recognition has an intersubjective structure, even if the "other" in this case is the film as a quasi-subject (Mikel Dufrenne) or a subject-object (Vivian Sobchack). In a previous essay on cinematic shocks I tried to show how film viewers may gain aesthetic recognition in two forms: *self-recognition* and *recognition of accord*.[65] Extending Ricoeur's idea of self-recognition, I claimed that being strongly affected by a film and thus undergoing an intense lived-body experience in the cinema allows for a safe and pleasurable form of corporeal self-awareness: I can recognize myself vis-à-vis the aesthetic subject-object because I feel myself strongly affected by it. As already hinted at above, recognition of accord, in turn, comes about when I experience the comforting awareness that I am accepted inside a group—say, a cinema audience—and experience the aesthetic object equally with others.

In the case of film adaptations, aesthetic recognition works somewhat differently. If the reader-cum-spectator's wish for congruence is fulfilled, and the film on the screen coincides with what was imagined during the act of reading, the film adaption, via its makers, displays a similar sensibility, taste, and vision. In a satisfactory film adaption, what can otherwise hardly find expression—namely, my own personal concretization of the novel—has been given publically accessible form *by somebody else*. What was previously privately "in here" is now publically "out there." To quote once again a satisfied *Lord of the Rings* fan, who was at first very skeptical but ultimately felt utterly overwhelmed after seeing the film: "I was just like 'You've got to be kidding me,' and I literally was in tears. I just couldn't believe it because it was something that you envision in your head, and someone actually taking it from your head and putting it onscreen."[66] The film in this way becomes a confirmation, indeed a strengthening, of the reader's concretization.

What is more, if we take the assumption of phenomenological aesthetics seriously that the novel as aesthetic object derives from a constituting activity of the reader, then the satisfactory adaptation that corresponds to my personal concretization seems to share, publicly accept, and validate my aesthetic co-creation. It is as if some*one*—which is, in fact, a manmade some*thing*—has recognized my imaginative activity. Something so very intimate and private—"Our reading is *ours* . . . because it remains somehow ineffable, nontransferable to others," writes Christopher Grobe—all of a sudden finds social and public acknowledgment.[67] In the words of Martin Barker, there is the "*sheer pleasure* of seeing an external embodiment of one's previously private imagining. What people appear to gain from this is a *confirmation* not only that they were on the right lines, but also that it is thus a *shared, public* property."[68] Or, as Felski puts it: "We all seek in various ways to have our particularity recognized, to find echoes

of ourselves in the world around us."[69] We may therefore stipulate that, in a manner similar to Kant's argument about the desire for public confirmation of one's aesthetic judgements, the decision to watch a film adapation of a beloved novel implies an intersubjective demand for aesthetic recognition: the desire to see one's own concretization of the novel confirmed and acknowledged on the screen.

Disappointed readers-turned-viewers, on the other hand, feel denied their wish for congruence and their desire for recognition. Not only is there no acknowledgement of their own experience of reading, but that experience is brought by somebody else into a different, very concrete form, presented as final with the powerful means of the cinema. It is as if the film and its makers have ignored my own concretization, thus leaving it unacknowledged, and instead implicitly claim: "*This* is how one has to envision the book—and not how *you* had it in mind." Knowing very well that it does not make sense, one may nevertheless want to shout: "Why, Mr. John Hillcoat, did you make the radically dark and dismal world of McCarthy's *The Road* so much brighter in your adaptation, and why did you sentimentalize it?" It feels as if one had lost a competition.[70] Borrowing from Harold Bloom, we could speak of a psychological agon between the reader-concretization on the one hand, and the concretization of the film on the other hand.[71] In light of the concrete totality and visual-auditive fullness of the film adaptation, the readers feel powerless, for they are not able to show what their world would have looked like. This position of powerlessness can be, we have to conclude, deeply disappointing.

Of course, there may be other reasons for dissatisfaction in the face of adaptations. What my essay has suggested, however, is that it is worthwhile pursuing this psychological phenomenon by attending to the desires, emotions, and sensual experiences involved while watching adaptions—an aspect that adapation studies has not paid much attention to.[72] In the future the phenomenological approach informed by reception aesthetics suggested here may well be the methodological road for such an endeavor. It prevents us from brushing aside as naïve or misguided the readers-cum-spectators' negative responses when an adaptation once again has crushed something extremely vital: their great expectations.

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NOTES

This is a translated and significantly revised version of an earlier essay, which appeared in German as "Große Erwartungen. Literaturverfilmungen und die Imagination des Lesers," in *Auslassen, Andeuten, Auffüllen. Der Film und die Imagination des Zuschauers*, ed. Julian Hanich

and Hans Jürgen Wulff (Munich: Fink, 2012). I thank Brian Currid for his translation of the original German version. I would also like to thank Rita Felski, Bruce Holsinger, Philipp Hübl, Eckhard Lobsien, Hans Jürgen Wulff, and the anonymous reviewer of *New Literary History* for helpful suggestions.

1 Manohla Dargis, "Review: 'Nocturnal Animals,' Brutality Between the Pages and Among the Fabulous," *New York Times*, November 17, 2016, http://www.nytimes.com/2016/11/18/movies/nocturnal-animals-review-amy-adams-jake-gyllenhaal.html?_r=0.

2 In this essay, I primarily refer to film adaptations of illusion-creating novels, since they represent a lion's share of film adaptations of literature. See Brian McFarlane, "Reading Film and Literature," in *The Cambridge Companion to Literature on Screen*, ed. Deborah Cartmell and Imelda Whelehan (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2007), 19. However, some of my arguments also apply to adaptations of short stories and epics, plays, and poetry.

3 McFarlane, in his important book *Novel to Film: An Introduction to the Theory of Adaptation* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1996), also admits that this problem cannot be eliminated, even from academic studies (16). To be sure, adaptation studies is anything but a unified field. For a recent overview of various positions, see Kamilla Elliott, "Theorizing Adaptations/Adapting Theories," in *Adaptation Studies: New Challenges, New Directions*, ed. Jørgen Bruhn, Anne Gjelsvik, and Eirik Frisvold Hanssen (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 19–46.

4 McFarlane, *Novel to Film,* 18.

5 See the empirical evidence on viewers of Peter Jackson's *Hobbit* adapations in Jonathan Ilan and Amit Kama, "Where Has All the Magic Gone?: Audience Interpretive Strategies of *The Hobbit*'s Film-novel Rivalry," *Participations* 13, no. 2 (2016): 289–307.

6 Robert Stam, "Introduction: The Theory and Practice of Adaptation," in *Literature and Film: A Guide to the Theory and Practice of Film Adaptation*, ed. Robert Stam and Alessandra Raengo (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2005), 1–52.

7 André Bazin, "Adaptation, or the Cinema as Digest," in *Film Adaptation,* ed. James Naremore (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers Univ. Press, 2000), 21. Bazin sees in this digest-technique "the very principle of cinematic adaptation, whose aim is to simplify and condense a work from which it basically wishes to retain only the main characters and situations" (25). The opposite is true of adaptations of short stories, where elements can be added: see Robert Siodmak's *The Killers*, based on a short story by Ernest Hemingway, or John Ford's *Stagecoach*, based on a short story by Ernest Haycox.

8 Quoted in Thomas M. Leitch, "Twelve Fallacies in Contemporary Adaptation Theory," *Criticism* 45, no. 2 (2003): 170. The original reference is Joy Gould Boyum, *Double Exposure: Fiction into Film* (New York: New American Library, 1985), 60.

9 Christian Metz, *The Imaginary Signifier: Psychoanalysis and the Cinema* (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1982), 112.

10 Roman Ingarden, "Phenomenological Aesthetics: An Attempt at Defining Its Range," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 33, no. 3 (1975): 257–69. See also Ingarden, *The Cognition of the Literary Work of Art* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern Univ. Press, 1973) and Mikel Dufrenne, *The Phenomenology of Aesthetic Experience* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern Univ. Press, 1973). For literature, another locus classicus is, of course, Wolfgang Iser, *The Act of Reading: A Theory of Aesthetic Response* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1978). In film studies Daniel Yacavone has recently drawn attention to phenomenological aesthetics and Dufrenne's work in his *Film Worlds: A Philosophical Aesthetics of Cinema* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 2015) and "Film and the Phenomenology of Art: Reapprasing Merleau-Ponty on Cinema as Form, Medium, and Expression," *New Literary History* 47, no. 1 (2016): 159–86.

11 For the concept of *transfer*, see various articles by Winfried Fluck, for instance "Playing Indian: Aesthetic Experience, Recognition, Identity," in *Romance with America? Essays on Culture, Literature, and American Studies*, ed. Laura Bieger and Johannes Voelz (Heidelberg: Winter, 2009).

12 Paisley Livingston, "On the Appreciation of Cinematic Adaptations," *Projections* 4, no. 2 (2010): 112. For a similar point, see Victoria de Zwaan, "Experimental Fiction, Film Adaptation, and the Case of *Midnight's Children*: In Defense of Fidelity," *Literature-Film Quarterly* 43, no. 4 (2015): 246–62. De Zwaan is a disappointed reader-turned-viewer herself: in her text she variously describes her frustration over the 2012 adaptation of Salman Rushdie's novel.
13 See Melanie C. Green et al., "Transportation Across Media: Repeated Exposure to Print and Film," *Media Psychology* 11, no. 4 (2008): 515.
14 Joseph M. Boggs, *The Art of Watching Films: A Guide to Film Analysis* (Menlo Park, CA: Benjamin/Cummings, 1978), 185.
15 Boggs, *Art of Watching Film*, 189.
16 Katja Mellmann, "Das Buch als Freund—der Freund als Zeugnis: Zur Entstehung eines neuen Paradigmas für Literaturrezeption und persönliche Beziehungen, mit einer Hypothese zur Erstrezeption von Goethes *Werther*," in *Bürgerlichkeit im 18: Jahrhundert*, ed. Hans Edwin Friedrich, Fotis Jannidis, and Marianne Willems (Tübingen: Niemeyer 2006), 202.
17 Keith Oatley, *Such Stuff as Dreams: The Psychology of Fiction* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 101.
18 Dudley Andrew, who calls the question of work fidelity the most frequent subject of discussion when it comes to adaptation, writes: "Fidelity is the umbilical cord that nourishes the judgments of ordinary viewers as they comment on what are effectively aesthetic and moral values after they emerge from Baz Luhrmann's *Romeo + Juliet* (1996), or Steven Spielberg's *The Color Purple* (1985), or *The Passion of the Christ* (2004). If we tuned in on these discussions we might find ourselves listening to a vernacular version of comparative media semiotics." Not only a comparative media semiotics, but also a comparative reception aesthetic plays a role here. See Andrew, *What Cinema Is!* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 126–27.
19 Hajnal Király, "The Medium Strikes Back: 'Impossible Adapation' Revisited," in *Adaptation Studies: New Challenges, New Directions*, ed. Bruhn, Gjelsvik, and Hanssen (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 182.
20 Andreas Kilb, "Vater, Mutter, Knochengerippe: Die entsetzlich entschlackte Anatomie eines Albtraums: Ewan McGregor verfilmt Philip Roths Roman *Amerikanisches Idyll*—und vertut eine große Chance," *Frankfurter Allgemeine* (November 18, 2016), http://www.faz.net/aktuell/feuilleton/kino/vater-mutter-gerippe-ewan-mcgregors-regie-debuet-14532599.html?printPagedArticle=true#pageIndex_2 (my translation).
21 Morris Beja, *Film and Literature: An Introduction* (New York: Longman, 1979), 88.
22 Robert Stam, *Literature Through Film: Realism, Magic, and the Art of Adaptation* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2005), 5.
23 McFarlane, *Novel to Film,* 16, 18.
24 Livingston, "On the Appreciation of Cinematic Adaptations," 104–27.
25 McFarlane, *Novel to Film,* 15 (original emphasis).
26 Quoted from Ilan and Kama, "Where Has All the Magic Gone," 301.
27 Livingston, "On the Appreciation of Cinematic Adaptations," 121. The quotation comes from Kristin Thompson, *The Frodo Franchise:* The Lord of the Rings *and Modern Hollywood* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 2007), 88. In fact, in his large-scale empirical study on viewer responses to *Lord of the Rings*, Martin Barker points out that some readers even express gratidude for the film's ability to fill in and visualize what they had difficulty in imagining. Barker, "Envisaging 'Visualisation': Some Challenges from the International *Lord of the Rings* Audience Project," *Film-Philosophy* 10, no. 3 (2006): 18, http://www.film-philosophy.com/2006v10n3/barker.pdf.
28 That's why I deal neither with cases of reading a book after having seen the adaptation nor with experiences of reading novelizations—novels based on a film—and the potential

frustrations that are involved. On the former, see Stam, "Introduction," 14; on the latter, see Jan Baetens, "From Screen to Text: Novelization, the Hidden Continent," in *The Cambridge Companion to Literature on Screen*, ed. Deborah Cartmell and Imelda Whelehan (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2007), 226–38.

29 My use of the term "mineness" goes in a direction similar to that of Thomas Metzinger, but is not exactly identical. I am primarily interested in various impressions of *personally experienced* active control and "authorship" in the reception of novels and film adaptation. But Metzinger sees statements like "I experience my leg subjectively as always belonging to me," "I always experience my thoughts and feelings as part of my consciousness," "My acts of will are initiated by me," as examples of mineness that he defines as a higher sense of possession of individual forms of phenomenal content. See Metzinger, "Philosophische Perspektiven auf das Selbstbewusstsein: Die Selbstmodell-Theorie der Subjektivität," in *Die Psychologie des Selbst*, ed. Werner Greve (Weinheim, Germany: Psychologie Verlags Union, 2000), 317–36, also available at http://www.philosophie.uni-mainz.de/metzinger/publikationen.

30 Note that my discussion of an amplified sense of mineness contains no evaluative claims: it is simply intended as a descriptive clarification of the experience of watching an adaption after having established a bond with the book.

31 See Christian Metz, "Photography and Fetish," *October* 34 (Fall 1985): 88.

32 The thesis that the shift to quiet individual reading promoted an increase in imagination has been defended several times. See Albrecht Koschorke, *Körperströme und Schriftverkehr: Mediologie des 18. Jahrhunderts* (Munich: Fink, 1999); Christopher Collins, *The Poetics of the Mind's Eye: Literature and Psychology of Imagination* (Philadelphia: Univ. of Pennsylvania Press, 1991); and Renate Brosch, "Weltweite Bilder, lokale Lesarten: Visualisierungen der Literatur," in *Visual Culture*, ed. Monika Schmitz-Emans and Gertrud Lehnert (Heidelberg: Synchron, 2008), 61–82.

33 On collective viewing, see Hanich, *The Audience Effect: On the Collective Cinema Experience* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh Univ. Press, 2018).

34 See Hanich, "Cinematic Shocks: Recognition, Aesthetic Experience, and Phenomenology," *Amerikastudien/American Studies* 57, no. 4 (2012).

35 Roland Barthes, *The Pleasure of the Text,* trans. Richard Howard (New York: Hill and Wang, 1975), 11–12.

36 See Hans Magnus Enzensberger, "Bescheidener Vorschlag zum Schutze der Jugend vor den Erzeugnissen der Poesie," in *Mittelmaß und Wahn: Gesammelte Zerstreuungen* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1988), 33–34.

37 Laura Mulvey, *Death 24x a Second: Stillness and the Moving Image* (London: Reaktion, 2006), 161ff.

38 Vivian Carol Sobchack, *The Address of the Eye: A Phenomenology of Film Experience* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton Univ. Press, 1992). For a critique of Sochback's concept of the "film's body," see for instance Kevin W. Sweeney, "The Persistence of Vision: The Re-Emergence of Phenomenological Theories of Film," *Film and Philosophy* 1 (1994): 29–38; and Garrett Stewart: *Between Film and Screen: Modernism's Photo Synthesis* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1999). For a recent response by Sobchack to her critics, see Hanich, "The Journeys of a Film Phenomenologist: An Interview with Vivian Sobchack on Being and Becoming," *Necsus—European Journal of Media Studies* (Fall 2017), https://necsus-ejms.org/vivian-sobchack-interview/.

39 Edward S. Casey, "Comparative Phenomenology of Mental Activity: Memory, Hallucination, and Fantasy Contrasted with Imagination," *Research in Phenomenology* VI (1976): 14.

40 See Hanich, "Omission, Suggestion, Completion: Film and the Imagination of the Spectator," *Screening the Past* 43 (2018), http://www.screeningthepast.com/2018/02/omission-suggestion-completion-film-and-the-imagination-of-the-spectator/.

41 Colin McGinn, *Mindsight: Image, Dream, Meaning* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Press, 2004), 28.
42 Iser has already pointed this out: "This strange quality of the image becomes apparent when, for instance, one sees the film version of a novel one has read. Here we have optical perception which takes place against the background of our own remembered images. As often as not, the spontaneous reaction is one of disappointment, because the characters somehow fail to live up to the image we have created for them while reading" (Iser, *Act of Reading,* 137–38).
43 Cormac McCarthy, *The Road* (New York: Knopf, 2006), 81.
44 Jean-Paul Sartre, *The Imaginary: A Phenomenological Pyschology of the Imagination* (London: Routledge, 2004), 9.
45 This also applies if the text contradicts itself.
46 Casey, *Imagining: A Phenomenological Study* (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1976), 96–97.
47 See also Sandra Poppe, *Visualität in Literatur und Film: Eine medienkomparatistische Untersuchung moderner Erzähltexte und ihrer Verfilmungen* (Göttingen: Vandenhoek & Ruprecht, 2007), 106. However, it seems misconceived to consider the film de facto as an illustration of the filmmakers' imagination, but this is often done anyway. In post-receptive engagement with film adaptations, disappointment is often directed against concrete individuals, often the director.
48 I limit myself to *visual* imagination: when reading a novel the mode of mental visualization seems more dominant than the imagining of acoustic, smell, taste, and tactile impressions. All the same, this separation of the senses is artificial and serves merely heuristic purposes. What I assert in points three, four, five, and six seems true also for the sense of hearing.
49 McCarthy, *The Road,* 3.
50 Leitch, "Twelve Fallacies," 161.
51 See Oatley: "When events occur, or things are said, in a story or in a life, we assimilate them to our own schemas. Events that happen and words that are said are not just absorbed in an unprocessed fashion. We are not video cameras. What we see and what we read are taken in insofar as they achieve significance for us, by becoming parts of our schematic models, our implicit theories of what we know about the world" (Oatley, *Such Stuff as Dreams,* 61).
52 Franz Kafka, "The Metamorphosis," trans. David Wyllie, https://www.gutenberg.org/files/5200/5200-h/5200-h.htm.
53 Seymour Chatman, "What Novels Can Do that Films Can't (and Vice Versa)," *Critical Inquiry* 7, no. 1 (1980): 131.
54 To be sure, a film can also exceed my ideal of beauty. Perhaps Greta Garbo is so "divine" that I haven't seen anything more beautiful in my life and thus have to readjust my ideal of beauty with the concreteness of the image.
55 McGinn, *Mindsight,* 104.
56 Theodor A. Meyer, *Das Stilgesetz der Poesie* (1901; Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, 1990), 40 (emphasis in original). My thanks to Eckhard Lobsien for pointing out this important and largely forgotten book. Meyer, who was later praised by Theodor W. Adorno and presented in a new edition with an introduction by Iser, formulated a harsh critique of the aesthetics of vision (*Anschauungsästhetik*) à la Friedrich Theodor Vischer or Karl Robert Eduard von Hartmann, which posits an inner vision while reading.
57 Chatman, "What Novels Can Do that Films Can't," 126.
58 Even if in our imagination nothing is lost, some texts confront us with an excess of information that cannot be concretized in its entirety. For this reason, a novel with too much detail can be frustrating.

59 Meyer, *Das Stilgesetz der Poesie*, 68.
60 See, for instance, chapter 4 in Hanich, *Cinematic Emotion in Horror Films and Thrillers: The Aesthetic Paradox of Pleasurable Fear* (New York: Routledge, 2010).
61 See also Boggs, *The Art of Watching Film*, 189.
62 See the special issue on "Recognition" of *New Literary History* 44, no. 1 (2013) as well as the special issue on "Tocqueville's Legacy: Towards a Cultural History of Recognition in American Studies" of *Amerikastudien/American Studies* 57, no. 4 (2012).
63 Rita Felski, *Uses of Literature* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2008), 23.
64 Winfried Fluck, "Fiction and the Struggle for Recognition," *Amerikastudien/American Studies* 57, no. 4 (2012): 696–700.
65 See Hanich, "Cinematic Shocks," (2012).
66 Thompson, *The Frodo Franchise*, 88.
67 Christopher Grobe, "On Book: The Performance of Reading," *New Literary History* 47, no. 4 (2016): 569 (original emphasis).
68 Barker, "Envisaging 'Visualisation,'" 19 (original emphasis). However, Barker also quotes a participant in his empirical *Lord of the Rings* project, whose comment hints at the downside of aesthetic recognition: "I feel just a tinge of sadness that millions of people will share a vision of Middle-earth that I had thought was personal to me for so long. It was as if someone had got inside my head and broadcast my dreams and visualisations." Quoted from Barker, "Envisaging 'Visualisation,'" 19.
69 Felski, *Uses of Literature*, 43.
70 Literary scholar Heinz Antor notes: "By way of concretization, each reader lends the text its own individual determination that *competes* with those of other acts of concretization by other recipients." Heinz Antor, "Konkretisation/Konkretisierung," in *Metzler Lexikon Literatur- und Kulturtheorie: Ansätze—Personen—Grundbegriffe*, ed. Ansgar Nünning (Stuttgart: Metzler, 2001), 330 (emphasis mine).
71 The fact that this agon is described frequently in film criticism and film studies with martial metaphors attests to its power. Film critic Kilb, for example, speaks of the "eternal struggle of the cinema with the book." The cinema, according to Kilb, devours books and acts like a "vampire who lives from the blood of books." See Kilb, "Eine neue Runde im ewigen Kampf des Kinos mit dem Buch," *Die Zeit*, February 7, 1997. In an instructive essay, adaptation scholar Elliott even uses the metaphor of war. See Elliott, "Novels, Films, and the Word/Image Wars," in *A Companion to Literature and Film,* ed. Stam and Alessandra Raengo (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2004).
72 For an argument how adaptation studies has ignored the sensual richness of film adaptations, see David Evan Richard "Film Phenomenology and Adaptation: Words Made Flesh" (PhD diss., Univ. of Queensland, 2017).