Adaptation in a Post-Digital Age: Aesthetic and Methodological Approaches to Reviving Texts of the Past

Submitted by Joshua Tristan Jamison Gaunt to the University of Exeter as a thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Film by Practice in May 2011

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I certify that all material in this thesis which is not my own work has been identified and that no material has previously been submitted and approved for the award of a degree by this or any other University.

Signature………………………………………………………………………. 
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Abstract

The following study charts the research and execution of two film projects that contribute towards my PhD in Film by Practice, *Here Lies Lucy: A Vampire Yarn* (2008) and *Tera Toma* (2009). Based on the texts of Bram Stoker’s *Dracula* and Robert Louis Stevenson’s *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, these two films are an attempt to breathe new life into the original works, which have been diluted and over-layered with meaning throughout the mechanical age.

In the post-digital age, new aesthetic and methodological approaches to film production are emerging which are intended to humanise the digital by both embracing and countering the cold binary technologies that are dominating our lives today. Post-digital filmmakers are attempting to stimulate technology that no longer has any physical relation to the world and by doing so, are creating work that is more self-reflexive and immediate than ever before. Now that we are faced with these new post-digital dimensions, can we create new ways of representing the diluted texts of the past?

My PhD by practice attempts to answer this question by investigating post-digital aesthetic and methodological trends that have emerged during the past 15 years in filmmaking and applying them to my own adaptations of past texts. As a result, I have developed new ways of approaching my own work, which contribute to an ever-evolving practical discourse concerned with the humanisation of digital technology in artistic practice.
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INTRODUCTION: POST-DIGITAL AESTHETICS & METHODOLOGIES

The Post-Digital Age

Today, the digital revolution has passed. We exist in an age in which ‘the interface is disappearing, or certainly migrating, from a cabled, box-bound environment to a wireless multi-sensory, multi-modal, mobile form.’ (Roy Ascott, 2008, p. 47) This condition marks our emergence from a conceptual paradigm shift that has occurred between the material and the binary – the mechanical and the electronic – a transition, which has been presented to us as something ‘apparently as abrupt as the ‘on/off’, ‘zero/one’ logic of the machines now pervading our daily lives’ (Robert Pepperell & Michael Punt, 2000, p. 2). During the past decade, however, it has become apparent through a variety of art practices (including film), that this shift has provided us with something more complex than it’s inherent binary logic – the post-digital.

Coined by Kim Cascone (2000) in his article The Aesthetics of Failure, the term post-digital was a response to the growing tendency in both popular and avant-garde music for intentional mistakes – a way of re-introducing humanity back into the cold sterility of the digital technology that had replaced the analogue systems of music production’s past.

The “post-digital” aesthetic was developed in part as a result of the immersive experience of working in environments suffused with digital technology: computer fans whirring, laser printers churning out documents, the sonification of user-interfaces, and the muffled noise of hard drives. But more specifically, it is from the “failure” of digital technology that this new work has emerged: glitches, bugs, application errors, system crashes, clipping, aliasing, distortion, quantisation noise, and even the noise floor of computer sound cards are the raw materials composers seek to incorporate into their music. (Cascone, pp.12/13)

It was Cascone’s belief that the flaws inherent in the digital systems permeating everyday life could be linked with the flaws inherent in humanity. Therefore, despite digital technology’s progression towards a clean and binary future, its human usage revealed an ambiguity rooted in an analogue past where scratches, hisses, pops and other aural signs of disintegration were commonplace. According to Cascone, this aesthetic approach was a continuation of traditions started by the avant-garde composers of the mechanical age. John Cage’s 1952 composition, 4’33”, and the
Italian Futurist movement of the early 20th century are cited for their shift in focus away from the ‘foreground of musical notes to the background of incidental sound’ (Cascone, 2000, p.14). In the 1990s, DJs who had begun to integrate themselves into this new world of digital systems took the ideas presented by Cage and the Futurists as inspiration. In order to break away from the repetitive, formulaic nature of early **Techno** music, these musicians started to insert human elements (faults) into their compositions, developing a plethora of sub-genres, the most popular of which was coined **Glitch**. The method by which these elements were inserted into the music varied depending on the technology used and the composer’s approach. In one instance, the experimental group, **Oval** (Cascone, 2000, p.17) physically manipulated their compact discs by painting over the encoded data. This resulted in an unusual skipping sound that one usually associates with accidentally scratched and smudged CDs. Eventually, these human approaches to digital music were assimilated into production software used by composers. Due to the non-linear, flexible nature of these programs, musicians were able to explore a variety of computer programming techniques. As Cascone explains: ‘Time-stretching vocals and reducing drum loops to eight bits or less were some of the first techniques used in creating artefacts and exposing them as timbral content.’ (Cascone, 2000, p.15)

Initially, the discourse surrounding the post-digital was based merely on aesthetics. This was perhaps due to the invisibility of the initial methodologies of post-digital art. In music, the performative and receptive qualities of this philosophy were limited to those who understood the processes and the technology involved – the composers themselves. As Ian Andrews states: ‘Because the digital processes often occur within the sealed off virtual space of the performer’s computer, hidden from the audience and only privy to the composer/performer, the audience’s engagement with these processes becomes, at times, rather limited.’ (2002, p.7) The computer’s ability to simulate and perform a range of tasks away from the plain view of the audience initially detracted from the transparency of traditional instruments and the self-reflexive experience of live music. Recently, however, as technology has become more mobile (even more-so than the laptop), these human qualities are being reconciled through the development of touch screen technology. Visibly haptic processes have returned to live performance in the form of loop/effects devices and most recently, Apple’s **iPad, iPhone** and **iPod Touch**, revealing to the audience, yet again, ‘how the performer is performing’ (Andrews, p.7). As the example set by
music’s interaction with the digital shows, the post-digital has moved away from describing a mere aesthetic quality and has become a term that attempts to explain our complex involvement with digital technology – an interaction which both embraces the digital age by accepting its functionality within society, and rejects it by holding onto the ‘unpredictability and ambiguity of human experience’ (Pepperell & Punt, 2000, p.2). This philosophical oscillation, which is now both consciously and subconsciously inherent in the way that we go about our daily lives, has moved us firmly away from the binary implications set by terms like the digital revolution, and into a more complex, grey area. Robert Pepperell and Michael Punt best describe this post-digital existence as a kind of membrane with a ‘dual and contradictory function: like a transparent wall, it is both changing and staying the same’ (ibid, p.2). More recently, theorist and artist, Mel Alexenberg has attempted to define post-digital in a way that acknowledges the aesthetic, methodological and self-reflexive qualities of its use in art discourse:

Of or pertaining to art forms that address the humanization of digital technologies through interplay between digital, biological, cultural, and spiritual systems, between cyberspace and real space, between embodied media and mixed reality in social and physical communication, between high tech and high touch experiences, between visual, haptic, auditory, and kinesthetic media experiences, between virtual and augmented reality, between roots and globalization, between autoethnography and community narrative, and between web-enabled peer-produced wikiart and artworks created with alternative media through participation, interaction, and collaboration in which the role of the artist is redefined. (2011, p.35)

**Post-Digital Filmmaking**

Post-digital aesthetics and methodologies have also made their way into film practice during the past 15 years. Although it has taken longer for the digital to be integrated into the production, post-production and distribution of films, than it did with music, it seems that filmmakers have begun to recognise that this new technology ‘offers an opportunity to look back to the ‘before’, to the ‘then’ of the indexical image, in the changing light of the ‘after’, the ‘now’ (Laura Mulvey, 2006, p.21). This can be seen in two ways. Firstly through the recent high definition scramble for the film look, with the release of full-frame-sensor DSLR technology (Canon EOS 5D Mark II) and 4K resolution in cameras such as the Red One. These technological advances have allowed digital filmmakers the ability to capture images
that are indistinguishable from 35mm film. And secondly, through what filmmaker Harmony Korine has described as ‘mistakism’ (Nicholas Rombes, 2009, p.27) a purposely negative aesthetic approach to filmmaking that reveals our ‘digital tools to be only as perfect, precise, and efficient as the humans who build them’ (Cascone, 2000, p.13). Accidental degradation, presented in the scratches and hairs of the celluloid past, has been replaced by the purposeful mistakes of the filmmaker in his/her extensive use of hand-held photography, digital grain and slow-shutter in low-light conditions and experimental non-linear post-production techniques. Glitch has entered the consciousness of today’s filmmakers just as it did with the musicians of the 90s. Originating in the faults caused by re-used miniDV tapes and poorly compressed/encoded files during the early days of online video, the compression artefact has become one of many visible post-digital trends in filmmaking. What separates its use in film from its development in music, however, is how quickly it has been embraced by different schools of video and film production, from the avant-garde fringes of video art produced by VJs such as the Dutch collective, Oneseconds (Fig 1.), to the chart-topping hip-hop videos of Kanye West (Fig 2.), to big budget Hollywood films such as *Scott Pilgrim vs. The World* (Edgar Wright, 2010). Data-moshing (as this technique is called in some circles) and other humanizing aesthetics are seen by many as a continuation (ironically) of the anti-aesthetics introduced in the late-90s by Thomas Vinterberg and Lars von Trier with the Dogme 95 movement. As Nicholas Rombes states, ‘it is no coincidence that the Dogme 95 movement – with its preference for disorder, for shaky, degraded images, for imperfection – emerged at the dawn of the digital era, an era that promised
precisely the opposite: clarity, high definition, a sort of hyper-clarified reality.’ (2009, p.1) In fact, some may consider Vinterberg and von Trier to be the forefathers of post-digital film practice with their vow to ‘force truth’ (Stig Bjorkman, 2003, p.161) out of their characters and settings by focusing on a kind of purity of performance – an immediacy that could not only reconcile humanity with the digital but with cinema itself.

Performance is indeed where the post-digital is most prominently emerging in film practice today. Digital film’s inexpensive ability to endlessly record data has resulted in an increase of long-takes and improvised work in films such as Timecode (Mike Figgis, 2000) and Inland Empire (David Lynch, 2007), productions that have also experimented with new collaborative methods of working with actors. As David Lynch discusses, ‘We need to do what’s feeling correct right now, no matter what, and the digital world is giving us that chance more and more. Small crew. Long takes. Feel it and you’re staying true to the idea more than ever.’ (Mike Figgis, 2007, p. 19) Although the experimental digital films of Figgis and Lynch are concerned (perhaps more than ever) with aesthetics, this always remains secondary to the immediacy of the actors’ performances. In an almost Brechtian manner, Inland Empire is more about Laura Dern’s collaboration with David Lynch and their daily effort to make a completely improvised film from scratch, than the story itself. The same goes for Figgis’ Hotel (2001), where the actors were given a platform to create their characters and stories as they were being filmed. It is the combination of both post-digital aesthetics and methodology that makes these films what they are. Process, to a large extent, is now becoming integrated into the narratives of films and our experience of both making and viewing films is turning more self-reflexive. As Nicholas Rombes states: ‘Such objects of display are not weak gimmicks to cover up narrative emptiness, but rather testaments to how the storytelling process itself – in both cinema and in books – has become, practically, a genre.’ (2009, p.103)

In 2004, Lev Manovich put forth the idea of two separate schools that have influenced the film industry when working with digital technology. Both schools emanate from already existing tendencies established at the very birth of cinema: Digital Special Effects and DV Realism (pp. 211-213). The former, which one would associate with films like The Lord of the Rings (Peter Jackson, 2001-2003), draws from the fantastical post-production techniques pioneered by Georges Méliès while the latter, which one would associate with Dogme 95, derives from the observational
and seemingly improvised techniques associated with the Lumière brothers. However, much like the changes that have occurred in live post-digital music, film has responded to our ever-increasing knowledge of the processes that go into making digital moving images. This is almost certainly due to digital technology’s accessibility – revealing what was once an impenetrable science to be nothing more than a series of computer functions that can be learned online in the comfort of one’s own living room. In other words, it is now easier for a contemporary, media savvy audience to recognise the lack of humanity in solely digital effects. As a result, Manovich’s two schools have begun to overlap in film production over recent years, where filmmakers have started to combine digital technology’s ability to create never-before-seen images with the immediacy of performance – creating a kind of post-digital mainstream cinema where the magic is still hidden behind the methods of an actor. For example, in *A Scanner Darkly* (2006) Richard Linklater uses digital rotoscoping in an attempt to visualise Philip K. Dick’s paranoid, futuristic world of drug abuse and espionage. The result is a seemingly animated film full of shifting forms that is in fact, layered over an already existing live action film full of talking heads and semi-improvised dialogue. Rather than relying solely on digital animation and CGI, Linklater used an aesthetic technique first pioneered by animators at the beginning of the 20th century, in order to preserve the spontaneity of actors’ performances – a quality that theoretically lifts the film above mere digital animation.
The motivation to retain this human trait within digital storytelling is becoming more apparent with the focus now being shifted towards the use of performance capture in mainstream film. In fact, the highest grossing international blockbuster to date, Avatar (James Cameron, 2009), is testament to our complex post-digital existence. It is a film that prides itself on its photorealistic illusions, much like its predecessors – The Lord of the Rings, King Kong (Peter Jackson, 2005), and Beowulf (Robert Zemeckis, 2007). However, since the film’s release, Cameron has gone to great lengths to explain the technology behind the film, almost as if its images would lose their authenticity without some kind of widely understood human process behind them. In the same way that post-digital aesthetics ‘reveal and flaunt the seams that bind together reality and the representation of that reality’, these methodological approaches are also intended to familiarise audiences with the use of this technology within film – thereby offering a ‘countermeasure – in the form of a human signature’ (Rombes, 2009, p.2) – to the cold binary of the digital.

**Post-Digital Adaptation**

As Laura Mulvey (2006) discusses in her book, Death 24x a Second, the digital has enabled the viewer to re-address past technologies in the light of today’s technical advancements. This is partially due to the interactive nature of the technology, which, with the public release of the DVD in 1997, allowed us to pause, scan through and contemplate the stories of the past with more accuracy than previously imagined. As Mulvey states: ‘At a time when new technologies seem to hurry ideas and their representations at full tilt towards the future, to stop and to reflect on cinema and its history also offers the opportunity to think about how time might be understood within wider, contested, patterns of history and mythology’
(Mulvey, 2006, pp. 22-23). Today’s explosion of online video content, combined with the accessibility of non-linear editing software in the home has made this process even more interactive as amateur and professional filmmakers alike have started to take the nostalgic filmic images of the past and remix them within the context of today’s socio-political and technological landscape. The layperson has been given the ability to participate in a theoretical practice of their own by deconstructing and quoting the stories and myths of the past with ease. This democratisation of technology has, therefore, blurred the line between adaptation and homage. Through the interactivity inherent in the post-digital age, the ‘specificity of cinema, the relation between its material base and its poetics dissolves while other relations, intertextual and cross-media, begin to emerge’ (Mulvey, 2006, p.18).

Similar to the contradictions inherent within the digital, new ambiguities have appeared in a grey area between where an adaptation ends and an original work begins. Clear examples of this can be seen in recent digital work by filmmakers such as Bernard Rose in his Tolstoy modernisations (Ivan’s xtc., 2000 & The Kreutzer Sonata, 2008), Mike Figgis in his meta-adaptation of John Webster’s The Duchess of Malfi (Hotel, 2001) and Kristian Levring in his Dogme 95 mash-up of Shakespeare’s King Lear (The King is Alive, 2000). All of these films successfully modernise their original texts, not through the use of mise-en-scene, but through the aesthetics of today’s post-digital environment with the use of grainy, low-resolution hand held digital cameras. Their methodological approaches, based on collaborative improvisational techniques, have expanded their narratives beyond mere adaptation by focusing not only on the original texts, but also on the process of re-telling them. This has, therefore, moved the initial purpose of adaptation away from fidelity to the original text and towards a broader understanding of the original work in a mythological sense.

**My Approach**

With my own PhD work, my intention has been to explore the various aesthetic techniques and methodological trends that have surfaced within a post-digital context over the past 15 years of film production. In doing so, I hoped to find a method for adapting the texts of the past for the post-digital age. For my source texts I chose to adapt Bram Stoker’s Dracula and Robert Louis Stevenson’s The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde because of their relevance within 20th and 21st century culture. As
Christopher Frayling (1996) states in his book, *Nightmare: The Birth of Horror*: ‘these stories are among the most significant contributions by British writers of the last century [19th], to the mass culture of this century [20th] – and I mean ‘mass’: films, videos, books, poems, toys, games, computer software, comics, advertisements, theme-restaurants, everything from novels to breakfast cereal products’ (p.13). The transition that these novels have made from the page, on to stage, screen and an abundance of other media can be easily contrasted with the development of technology itself. In other words, the journey of these texts has been, to a certain extent, a technological journey, and often one of redirection through human interaction. Frayling draws attention to this process as he discusses not only the trajectory of *Dracula* and *Jekyll and Hyde*, but also of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle’s *Sherlock Holmes* and Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein*:

In the process, the great horror stories have been re-created again and again: Frankenstein has been confused with his own creation, who has in turn become a thing of nuts and bolts, stitches and sutures; Dracula has become an attractive lounge-lizard in evening dress; Mr. Hyde has become a simian creature who haunts the rookeries of Whitechapel in East London; and Sherlock Holmes, dressed in his obligatory deerstalker and smoking a meerschaum pipe, says “Elementary, my dear Watson” whenever he exercises his powers of deduction. (Frayling, 1996. P.13)

These texts, over a century of cinema, have been so over-layered with meaning that their primary purpose (to provoke and surprise) has been diluted through repetition and confusion. However, the desire inherent in post-digital art practice to re-address technology’s past in light of the now by re-introducing a human element into the digital, gives today’s filmmakers the opportunity to re-address the texts of the past via their technological mutations – creating, as Pepperell and Punt would say, *myths of order from confusion*.

Given the confluence of past and present imperatives, one begins to suspect technological artefacts might function in a similar way to historical myths in that they serve as rationalizing models for those cultures that produce them. The confusion and complexity of actual events is reduced as we consider only those pieces of information that are accountable. Present realities (artefacts or social conditions) are regarded, retrospectively, as the inevitable outcome of an imagined past. In which case, technology’s culturally determining role is not only in the feats of data processing or earth-moving that it helps us achieve but also in the ideas it generates about itself, and us. (Pepperell & Punt, 2000, p.10)

By exploring areas of post-digital practice, my own work has attempted to bring new life to these *deceased* texts of the past in the same manner that the
filmmakers of the post-digital age have attempted to re-insert humanity into the digital. My first film, *Here Lies Lucy: A Vampire Yarn* (based on *Dracula*) investigates how the famous vampire story and its historically founded myth can be *re-textured* through digital technology, thereby referencing its journey through past material processes. It focuses on image design, juxtaposing the grainy hand-held look of post-digital aesthetics with interplay between non-linear post-production effects and craft-based motion graphics in order to reintroduce a hands-on, human approach to digital filmmaking. My second project, *Tera Toma* (based on *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*) uses improvisational, collaborative techniques advocated recently by filmmakers such as Mike Figgis in order to create a self-reflexive, split-screen narrative performed in real-time. This approach mimics the binary, yet singular nature of the original narrative while simultaneously creating a viewing experience that is both interactive and subjective.

Using these post-digital shooting methodologies and aesthetic techniques, my work attempts to communicate to its audience that what is happening, visually and aurally in the digital mode, is connected to the historical, technological, literary and filmic legacy surrounding the adapted texts. As I will discuss in the following chapters, this is achieved through the attempted humanisation of the digital. By experimenting with these approaches to filmmaking, I have endeavoured to jolt *Dracula* and *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* out of the repetitive cycles that they have been locked in as a result of their re-imagined mythologies within the mechanical age. By readdressing the technological, literary and socio-political circumstances surrounding their conception within a digital context, I have successfully contributed a practical discourse to the ways in which we might adapt the stories of the past as we move further into the post-digital age.
HERE LIES LUCY: ADAPTING THE META-TEXTURE

The Material and the Binary

The transition from analogue to digital, which occurred during the latter part of the 20th century, has caused filmmakers to re-assess the meaning and practicality of their work. During the celluloid era, filmmakers of all denominations (galleries, art-houses and multiplexes) had one standard – that of touch. Film was a physical and textural medium. Now that this shift has occurred, and this artistic medium, which we still frequently (and perhaps mistakenly) call film, no longer bears any physical relation to the world, a plethora of new debates have emerged ranging from methodology to spectatorship and the death of cinema. Perhaps the most pertinent of these discussions, however, is that of story and meaning. Has this digital revolution brought filmmakers into a new territory where new tales can be told, or are they dealing with issues that have always existed but merely intensified through technological advancement?

It is true that techniques such as CGI and digital compositing have shown audiences images that they may have never seen before, with a visual realism that is becoming more accomplished by the day. Nevertheless, as Graeme Harper (2007, p.148) states, ‘to approach digitalism…as if it, in itself, produces a new mode of aesthetics, new forms of narrative, new themes and new filmic representations is naïve.’ The computer generated characters, creatures and worlds of films such as The Lord of the Rings (Peter Jackson, 2001) and Avatar (James Cameron, 2009) are undeniable landmarks in the history of visual storytelling. They are manifested, however, by virtue of their association with an already existent physical reality. As Markos Hadjiouannou (2007) suggests, we experience the digital ‘like a simile, which implies an always indirect definition via another on the basis of similarity.’ In other words, we can imagine what the T-1000 robot from Terminator 2: Judgement Day (James Cameron, 1991) feels like due to our textural knowledge of the character’s three main components – liquid, metal and skin. In this instance, there is no evidence that the technological leap that created the T-1000 had any original effect on the film’s narrative. One can recognize this point, merely by watching Michael Crichton’s
film, *Westworld* (1973), where very physical special effects achieve the same narrative purpose as the computer generated ones in *T2*.

The development of digital technology in moving image has, therefore, brought filmmakers into an era where they are more divorced, in a haptic sense, from the physicality of what they are creating and as some may suggest, the humanity as well. Many have embraced this division, using technology to seek out new methods of rendering imagery that could be seen as more *perfect* than film by stepping away from any human signature. Others, however, have approached the digital in an entirely different way. They have seen some other potential inherent in the technology, recognizing a whole new variety of *imperfections* that can converse with their narratives. As filmmaker Michael Almereyda has said; ‘I don’t want to run from the present. And the idea of time-travel through CGI feels like a magic trick that might be an evasion of other issues’ (Pride, 1999). Filmmakers like Almereyda are not thinking of digital technology as something that needs to be developed in order to take us back or forward within a visual reality, but as a new texture to be explored within the space of its own existence, like celluloid before it. A texture, perhaps, that derives from the logical relationship that digital has with the world – one that can be seen but not touched. I speak of digital’s non-temporal, non-linear, numerical nature. So, as Harper and others have already hinted at, perhaps today’s filmmakers haven’t been given a new canvas at all, just a new kind of paint.

With these new tools, filmmakers have been given the ability to re-assess their aesthetic approach to filmmaking and perhaps strive for new meanings in their work. The democratisation of digital technology has led to an increase in non-linear editing techniques and this has enabled today’s filmmaker, literally and metaphorically, to compile layers of meaning onto pre-existing work by manipulating visual *textures* in an intertextu(r)al manner. As Jean Luc Goddard has suggested, the increased accessibility and usage of these desktop-editing techniques has enabled us to visualise the ‘vague and complicated system that the whole world is continually entering and watching’ (Lev Manovich, 2001, p.152). By moving away from touch, the visual aesthetics of film and of digital images in general are becoming more in tune with cognition. As Harper indicates, today’s artists ‘find a voice in a particular kind of non-linear dynamics. The arrival of the Internet is often quoted as determining such forms of nodal thinking, thinking unbound by measured unitary movement’ (2007, p.144). As a result, non-linear dynamics presented in the layering of digital textures
has come to represent what ‘is the basis of our mental life—performing associations’ (Manovich, 2001, p.152), bringing the processes of *digitextuality* to the fore, where ‘new digital media technologies make meaning not only by building a new text through absorption and transformations of other texts, but also by embedding the entirety of other texts (analogue and digital) seamlessly within the new’ (Holly Willis, 2005, pp.17-18).

As a theoretically informed practitioner, I find myself negotiating with these issues within my own work. My first PhD project, *Here Lies Lucy: A Vampire Yarn* (2008) consistently attempts to show awareness of the medium in which its narrative is being told. It has been largely influenced by the different approaches that contemporary filmmakers have taken to storytelling whilst experimenting within the digital medium. Simultaneously, however, the film attempts to readdress the mythological, literary and historic legacy behind its source text, Bram Stoker’s *Dracula*, by examining the various threads that lead to the original book’s publication as well as the journey that the story has made into film and beyond. This chapter will discuss the inception and continuation of these threads and how they have, through technological and mythological mutation, led into the production of my own work. It will also examine the post-digital aesthetics that I have adopted in my practice in order to address the digital image’s lack of material and how this engages with the narrative meaning of *Here Lies Lucy*.

**A History of Intertextuality**

Bram Stoker’s *Dracula* is widely regarded as one of the most popular books in the history of English literature. As a result, the novel has made an indelible mark on not only vampire mythology, but also the horror genres of the 20th and 21st centuries. The novel itself stems from a wide range of influences, all of which were painstakingly assembled during the 7 years that it took Stoker to research and write it.

In addition to extensive bibliographies on vampirism and the occult, there are copious notations on such diverse subjects as the appearance of Whitby Abbey and the cemetery (Stoker was particularly interested in sailors who died in nautical disasters), countless meteorological observations about tides, winds, etcetera, a few remarks about the sketches of the symptoms of insanity garnished from one of Stoker’s brothers, Sir William Thornley Stoker, a former president of the Royal College of Surgeons, and a short bibliography dealing with eastern European history. (Radu R. Florescu & Raymont T. McNally, 1989, P. 222)
Looking back on his research now, it seems that, amongst this network of scrutiny, there are two prominent strands of influence represented in Stoker’s publication. One derives from vampire mythology and its development in English literature and the other stems from historical fact and legend. Retrospectively, it appears that these two strands have always been associated with one another. It was Stoker’s seminal text, however, that solidified this interconnected web of myth, literature, technology and history and led to the way vampires have been perceived in a variety of mediums throughout the 20th and 21st centuries.

Some may say that Stoker’s extensive researching and borrowing of the myths and texts of the past was merely a continuation of the tradition set by the vampire genre’s introduction into English literature. The literary construct of the vampire, quite different from the Eastern European folkloric superstition of vampires, was first set into motion by Voltaire with his fellow eighteenth century Encyclopedists and philosophers, who discussed the idea of the vampire as a ‘primitive superstition’ (Christopher Frayling, 1996, p. 71) held by ill-informed and irrational peasants. In doing so, however, the notion of a vampire came to be defined in written form by the early 1800s, which made the social and literary elite of the time aware of the its existence. The first publication of a vampire tale in the English language was John Polidori’s *The Vampyre* (1819). This short story initiated a long intertextual tradition in vampire literature with its origins tangled in the musings of the great Romantic poet Lord Byron. Polidori, Byron’s one-time physician, is said to have developed *The Vampyre* over ‘two or three idle mornings’ (Frayling, 1996, p.72) in 1816, while accompanying his employer on a trip to Geneva. He was inspired by Byron’s tale of an aristocrat who dies while accompanying a young man on a trip to Turkey and returns from the grave, a yarn told during the same ghost-story session which bore Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein*. Polidori’s tale was only loosely based on Bryon’s lines, with the main character taking on the airs of a sinister lord who, raised from the dead, ravaged the necks of London’s elite. The physician did not intend for the writing to be published, leaving the manuscript behind in Geneva. It was discovered, however, and published under the presumed authorship of Byron. After contesting ownership over the story, Polidori was rewarded compensation, prompting Byron to flippantly reject the attribution, stating, ‘Damn the Vampyre - what do I know of Vampires?’ (Frayling, 1996, p. 75). This dismissal by the respected author resulted in the disgrace of Polidori amongst the literary elite of the time. Byron’s attitude towards Polidori’s
text, however, was futile as within a short matter of time, he came to be associated with the figure of the pallid and seductive aristocratic undead, leaving an indelible mark on future imaginings of vampires in literature. The famous poet’s passion for eastern culture was also filtered through Polidori’s story, and like many of his other works, solidified the almost mystical connection between the myths of the east and western culture.

Its popularity enhanced by its frequently misattributed authorship, *The Vampyre* quickly became a bestseller in Britain and the concept was adopted and adapted in equal measure. Enterprising writers and publishers sought to capitalise on this success from the outset, with Cyprien Bérard’s *Lord Ruthaven ou les Vampires* (1820) published just one year after Polidori’s 20-page story, and hinting at the possibility of a prequel describing the aristocratic vampire’s life pre-death. Closely following Bérard’s two-volume novel came a series of theatrical interpretations of Polidori’s tale, including Charles Nodier’s *Le Vampire* (1820) and James Robinson Planché’s *The Vampire or the Bride of the Isles; a romantic melodrama* (1820). By the mid-1850s, the vampire tale was well embedded into English art and literature, and featured some key motifs such as a link to aristocracy, the seductive quality of the protagonist, connections to mysterious eastern locations, and associations with innocent females. Perhaps the peak of the post-Polidori vampire came with James Malcolm Rymer’s serialisation, *Varney the Vampire or The Feast of Blood* (1846-7). Rymer’s saga totaled 868 double-page columns, released as a series and demonstrated the public’s already insatiable appetite for vampire stories. *Varney the Vampire*’s twisting storylines contributed to the history of vampire narrative by introducing new elements to the genre, and altering the already-established image of the undead. While Polidori’s Lord Ruthaven was a suave and seductive aristocrat, seen in the best London circles, Rymer’s Sir Francis Varney took on a more barbaric, beast-like persona, terrifying young maidens with his ‘fang-like’ teeth, silver lips, white visage and ‘dreadful eyes’ (Frayling, 1996, p80). Furthermore, due to its serialised nature, Rymer’s tale reinforced ideas of the vampire as an evolving myth comprised of and dispersing motifs in a variety of directions.

Stoker’s *Dracula* wove together many of the motifs and elements that had already been established in English literature by Polidori, Rymer and (unwittingly) Byron. Whether or not it was Stoker’s intention, *Dracula* at times reads like a smorgasbord of vampiric literary influences with the composite character of Count
Dracula at its centre. As a shape-shifter, Dracula is able to take on the broad range of influences from past publications. For instance, following the aristocratic status designated to the vampire by Byron and Polidori, he is depicted as a descendent of royal lineage. However, Rymer’s influence is also clear throughout the novel as Dracula acquires on occasion, the bestial traits of Varney the Vampire. What set Stoker’s text apart, however, from these previous literary incarnations of the vampire myth was the use of technology within its narrative. The book follows a mosaic-like structure comprised of diary entries, newspaper clippings and phonograph transcripts, which transport the reader instantly between different settings and timelines, interrupting the more linear flow of previous vampire tales. In this manner, Stoker’s novel served as a precursor to the modernism of the 20th century and gave readers a sense of the intertextual history that came before it. The narrative structure of the book, the literal stitching together of a variety of technologically produced materials, referred to the process of its own creation.

This tradition of borrowing, established by the confusing circumstances surrounding Polidori’s The Vampyre, made its way into the first (unofficial) filmic adaptation of Dracula, F.W. Murnau’s Nosferatu: A Symphony of Horror (1921). Made without the permission of the Stoker estate, Murnau’s seminal silent horror fell victim to copyright claims by Stoker’s surviving wife, Florence, shortly after its release. Although details, including the film’s title, were changed in an effort for its plagiarism to go unnoticed, the German production company, Prana Film, faced the threat of lawsuit and was forced to go into liquidation. Unsatisfied with this turn of events, ‘Florence decided that the most she could hope for was the removal of the film from circulation’ (Frayling, 1996, 109). As a result, all copies of Nosferatu were ordered destroyed by German court. Prints did resurface, however, in London shortly afterwards, leading to the film’s iconic status today. Florence Stoker’s attempt to eradicate the existence of Nosferatu is ironic considering the intertextual nature of its source text. Its reappearance, however, demonstrates the resilience of the vampire myth within culture. Dracula (and by association, Nosferatu) was so strongly rooted in the mythology and literature that came before it that any question of ownership became futile once it left the page. This struggle, and Murnau’s lasting impact on cinema history has ironically guaranteed Nosferatu’s relevance and connection to specific time and place – Weimar Germany – whose very laws threatened to destroy its existence.
In 1979, however, as German filmmakers were attempting to re-establish a national cinema in Germany, Werner Herzog used Murnau’s adaptation of Stoker’s tale as a means to reconnect with a pre-Nazi German heritage. Rather than returning to its source text, Bram Stoker’s Dracula, Herzog based his adaptation, Nosferatu: The Vampyre, on the deviated version that Murnau had created in an attempt to avoid copyright claims. As a result, the film takes certain liberties with plot and characterisation. As Herzog has stated, ‘my own film was solely based on the original Nosferatu, though I knew I wanted to inject a different spirit into my film’ (Cronin, 2002, P.155). Count Dracula, played by Klaus Kinski, is depicted as far less of a tyrant than in previous versions, imbued with existential angst as opposed to predatory evil. In this manner, Herzog successfully updates the character of Dracula with the sensibilities of not only the 20th century, but of German national identity as well. The focus on hunting and killing the vampire, which was very much a part of Stoker’s original novel, is replaced by an eerie acceptance of the vampire plague as something that is irrepressible. In Herzog’s version, instead of defeating Dracula, Jonathan Harker (played by Bruno Ganz) succumbs to vampirism during the film’s final reel. Kinski’s vampire is destroyed, as he is in Murnau’s original, but his spirit lives on through Harker who takes on the characteristics of Kinksi during the film’s climax. While highlighting the irrepressible nature of the vampire myth, this shift in plot also draws attention to the transference between the old and new Germany. As Herzog states regarding the vampire genre, ‘there is fantasy, hallucination, dreams and nightmares, visions, fear and, of course, mythology. What I really sought to do was connect my Nosferatu with our true German cultural heritage, the silent films of the Weimar era’ (Cronin, 2002, P.151). Following this line, the vampire myth, through Stoker’s concentration of its various elements, becomes inextricably linked to the traumas of the 20th century, in particular, that of Germany.

**A History in Print**

The impact that Stoker’s Dracula made on German culture through the films of Murnau and Herzog re-sews a thread of mythology and circumstance that can be traced back to the historical inspiration behind Stoker’s composite character. Aside from the pre-existent vampire publications in English literature during the 19th century, Stoker’s other predominant focus when researching Dracula lay in the
superstitions of Romanian and Transylvanian peasants. It is said that ‘two foreign works in particular could have drawn Stoker’s attention to the vampire’s folkloric connections with Romania and Transylvania. One was Alexandre Dumas’s *Mille et un fantomes* (*A Thousand and One Ghosts*), published under the initial title *Les Monts Carpathes* (*The Carpathian Mountains*), which centered on the castle of a Prince Brancoven’ and the other was ‘Jules Verne’s *Chateau des Carpathes* (*Castle of the Carpathes*)’ (Florescu & McNally, 1989, P.223) which referred to early princes in Romanian history. It was a non-fiction book, however, that lead Stoker to discover the historical figure who would become his novel’s namesake. Emily Gerard de Laszowska’s travelogue, *The Land Beyond the Forest*, provided Stoker with a wealth of information about Transylvanian superstitions as described in the following excerpt:

More decidedly evil, however, is the vampire *nosferatu*, in whom every Romanian peasant believes as firmly as he does in heaven or hell. The very person killed by a *nosferatu* becomes likewise a vampire after death, and will suck the blood of another innocent people till the spirit has been exorcised...by opening the grave of the person suspected and driving a stake through the corpse... In very obstinate cases it is further recommended to cut off the head and replace it in the coffin with a mouth filled with garlic, or to extract the heart and burn it, strewing the ashes all over the grave. (quoted in Florescu & McNally, 1989, p.225)

It was amidst this research that Stoker found the name for his vampire count in the form of 15th century tyrant, Vlad III Dracula, otherwise known as Vlad the Impaler. In fact, Stoker’s description of Count Dracula bears a striking resemblance to that of the historical figure. Stoker sees him as “a tall old man, clean shaven save for a long white moustache.” He has a waxy face, a high aquiline nose, and parted red lips. He was “clad in black from head to foot” – a description not unlike the dragon cape of the real Dracula. Stoker is aware of Dracula’s aristocratic origins; Dracula says, “Here I am noble; I am *boyar*; the common people know me, and I am master.” (Florescu & McNally, 1989, p.9) In 1448, Vlad III Dracula began his reign as prince of Wallachia. Throughout this period he quickly
became known for his bloodthirsty and merciless approach to warfare, slaying his enemies by impaling them on spikes and drinking their blood. Despite the small size of Wallachia (Transylvania today), compared with that of the Ottoman Empire at the time, Vlad Dracula intimidated and successfully defended his territory several times during his reign. It is said that this had much to do with his frightening reputation, which was solidified in legend as a result of a technological innovation of the time - print.

Catholic monks were among the many refugees resulting from Vlad the Impaler’s tyrannical rule. As they fled from Transylvania, they left manuscripts detailing the horrors of Vlad III Dracula in monasteries as they traveled west. These manuscripts seemed ‘to be designed for an unsophisticated audience.’ In them ‘Dracula is portrayed as a demented psychopath, a sadist, a gruesome murderer, a masochist, “one of the worst tyrants of history, far worse than the most depraved emperors of Rome such as Caligula and Nero”’ (Florescu & McNally, 1989, p.196).

As a result of the invention of the moveable-type printing press in Germany during the time, these manuscripts were copied and distributed across Eastern Europe, striking fear into those who found them. Here, Vlad the Impaler’s tale became linked to the relatively new idea of mass publishing. It is suspected that ‘Dracula stories, in fact, became, during the late fifteenth and early sixteenth century, the first best-sellers on a nonreligious motif’ (Florescu & McNally, 1989, p. 202). They may even be considered as the very origins of the horror genre in literature, with their primary purpose being to evoke terror into its readers.

This can be seen in the sensationalist images and text displayed on their covers:

Here begins a very cruel frightening story about a wild bloodthirsty man Prince Dracula. How he impaled people and roasted them and boiled their heads in a kettle and skinned people and hacked them to pieces like cabbage.

Fig 6. printed in 1499
He also roasted the children of mothers and they had to eat the children themselves. And many other horrible things are written in the land he ruled. (Florescu & McNally, 1989, p202)

Due to the dissemination of Vlad III Dracul’s horrific deeds via the printed word and image, the figure of the Impaler still dominates many of the superstitions that are inherent in the Transylvanian region. Even in the 20th century there have been eerie coincidences that have enabled historians to link Vlad the Impaler to the ongoing vampire mythology that Bram Stoker linked him to. After his death, for instance, it is said that Vlad III was buried beneath the altar in Snagov monastery. By his request, this was done in order to cleanse his spirit of evil. However, during an excavation of his grave in 1931 (the same year that Tod Browning’s Dracula was released by Universal), his tomb was found empty. ‘To the utter amazement of the researchers, there was not even a casket beneath it. Dracula’s presumed tombstone covered a huge empty grave-pit containing the bones of various animals, some ceramics, and other archeological finds dating back to the Iron Age’ (Florescu & McNally, P.180). It is said that fearful monks who did not want his body near the altar, removed his remains and buried them elsewhere. However, there remains no concrete evidence to support this theory despite the existence of a grave nearby housing a decapitated skeleton (Vlad III was decapitated after his death by request of Mohammed II of Constantinople). As Florescu and McNally have stated, ‘the riddles of Snagov remain unresolved to the delight of vampirologists’ (1989, p. 183).

**Here Lies Lucy: A Vampire Yarn**

In my own adaptation of the Dracula story, Here Lies Lucy: A Vampire Yarn, I have followed the influences that were woven into the publication of Bram Stoker’s original text as well as the changes that it has undergone throughout the 20th century. My primary objective was to create a vampire film that gave a sense of the interweaving nature of the vampire myth in the literature and folklore that lead to the publication of Stoker’s text. In the tradition of Polidori’s short story and the subsequent serialisation of Rymer’s Varney the Vampire, I aimed at producing a medium length film that suggested an ongoing tale and took on more of the structure of a serialised TV episode than the traditional structure of a short film. In terms of plot, I wanted to evoke the intertextual nature of Stoker’s original by mostly referencing the changes that adaptations have made since its original publication in
1897. In particular, I took Herzog’s *Nosferatu* as a starting point for looking at how I wanted to modernise the text and plot of the original for the 21st century. As a result, *Here Lies Lucy* is a departure from Stoker’s plot, with the focus on only four of the main characters from the original story - Jonathan, Lucy, Dr. Seward and Renfield. Furthermore, my characters deviated from the original text. For instance, Jonathan aka Heol-Gi (*Here Lies Lucy’s* Jonathan Harker) still worked in real estate, but was himself, originally from Korea, a visitor from the east. In order to update the themes of the original novel for the 21st century, I felt it was important to move away from the original’s *fear of the other/foreign* and place the protagonist, Jonathan as a solitary character within an already vampire-plagued England. This shift would not only serve as a comment on the original novel, but it would also update the story to a more modern understanding of what the vampire could mean and how it could result, not from displacement in the case for the original Jonathan Harker, but from solitude. As Herzog has discussed in relation to his 1979 version and today’s rapid increase in...
technology, ‘we are now heading for an era or solitude. Along with this rapid growth of forms of communication at our disposal – be it fax, phone, email, Internet or whatever – human solitude will increase in direct proportion…solitude is something more existential’ (Cronin, 2002, p. 156). Therefore, Here Lies Lucy would represent more of the existential anguish of the late 20th century versions of Stoker’s text than the original.

Another change that was made was to focus primarily on Lucy (Lucy Westenra in the original novel), who in Stoker’s original is Dracula’s first victim when arriving in Whitby. Over the years, despite the romance between Jonathan and Mina Harker being one of the main focuses and perhaps selling points in the original text, film versions have always had a strong focus on Lucy’s more complex character. In Herzog’s adaptation for example, Lucy and Mina are one and the same as Isabella Adjani’s character goes by the name of Lucy Harker and takes on both the romantic attachment to Jonathan and the form of Dracula’s possessed victim. In Guy Maddin’s Dracula: Pages from a Virgin’s Diary (2002), the sequences of events is displaced so that the story of Lucy being bitten and turning into a vampire takes precedent over Jonathan’s story, which occurs towards the middle of the film. In a similar manner, Here Lies Lucy would place Lucy at the centre of the story, along with Jonathan/Heolgi. Turning the tables, Lucy would be the Dracula-type character who dominates over the film’s secondary characters. I would also reference some of the iconic scenes and images from Herzog’s adaptation in order to visually reinforce these changes.

The narrative structure of Here Lies Lucy was influenced, not only by the original text’s erratic shifts between settings and timelines, but also another 20th century re-imagining of the vampire myth, Martin (George A. Romero, 1974). In this film it remains unclear throughout whether Romero’s protagonist is a vampire, or if he is just a psychologically disturbed individual. In order to reinforce this ambiguity, Martin exhibits a parallel narrative which switches between the bold colours of the present tense, the 1970s Pittsburgh when Martin is living, and the black and white past where Martin is a vampire in full period costume. It is unclear whether or not this second narrative is a dream in which the superstitious rants of his eastern European grandfather have manifested. Either way, Romero’s narrative presents an interesting clash of both reality and myth, which I intended to imitate in my version of Dracula. Here Lies Lucy would also follow a parallel narrative with one story following Jonathan during his last day as a human, and the other taking place in the past with
Lucy, a disturbed vampire who meets with her psychotherapist, Dr. Seward. In Lucy’s narrative there would be a strong connection with the vampire myth that influenced Bram Stoker, while Jonathan’s myth would represent a more modern story. The way that these two stories would connect would be, much like in Stoker’s original, via technology. Voicemail messages, emails and Youtube videos would be the means by which the viewer would follow the story. This was done in an effort to preserve the mosaic-like structure of the original book whilst updating it for the 21st century’s more networked culture that Herzog describes in the following excerpt.

Stoker’s novel is a kind of compilation of all the vampire stories floating around from romantic times. What is interesting is that it focuses so much on new technology; for example, the use of telegrams and early recording machines, the Edison cylinders. Like the changes society was undergoing in the nineteenth century, there may well be something similar taking place today, as for some time we have been living in the digital age. In both cases there is something of an uneasiness in society, and vampire stories always seem to accumulate in times of restlessness. (quoted in Cronin, 2002, pp. 155-156)

My second objective with Here Lies Lucy was to reference the historical influence behind Stoker’s Dracula. In particular, I felt it was important to bring to light the technological innovations that enabled the West to discover the 15th century tyrant, Vlad III Dracula. One of the many aesthetic approaches to Here Lies Lucy would be inclusion of a series of lino prints, which would marry some of the narrative together with the historical legend that led to Stoker’s original text. Reinforcing this idea in my research refocused my thinking back to the 20th century, in particular, an art movement that stemmed from the post-World War environment in Weimar Germany that produced Murnau’s Nosferatu (1921). In my view, there was a strong connection that could be made between the material process of printing, the vampire myth and the historical
influence behind Dracula. As a result, I looked at expressionist woodcuts by artists such as Belgium’s Frans Masereel and America’s Lynd Ward for inspiration. In the same manner that German prints that told sensational tales of Vlad the Impaler were considered the beginnings of mass published fiction, Masereel and Ward were considered the forefathers of the graphic novel with their woodcut novels, stories without words. Due to the psychological nature of their prints, many of the cinematic images and expressive acting in Here Lies Lucy derived from the woodcut novels I collected during my research. Lynd Ward’s Mad Man’s Drum was particularly influential with its hysterical imagery of religious corruption and madness. During the production of Here Lies Lucy, I would show Ward’s publication to members of the cast in order to communicate the look that I wanted from them. Subsequently, this look would be translated into a series of lino prints that I would carve and place into the film.

Digital Texture & Meaning

As previously discussed, the texture and materiality of digital film is a contradiction that has been widely explored in the contemporary filmmaking environment. There seems to be a consistent struggle that cinematographers, directors and editors have (whether they are aware of it or not) with the numerical, intangible nature of their work, even when he/she has openly embraced this technological shift. This struggle is made apparent by Harper’s observation that ‘digitalism found its connection to humanity not in its true form, which was abstract, but in its representation of an interface based initially on touch’ (2007, p. 149). Despite the technology’s natural progression towards the metaphysical, its practicality still
remains grounded in our human desire to feel. Instead of replacing the tangible flat-bed editing suites of the past with a more cognitive-based editing apparatus, we have the keyboard, the computer mouse and the more recent touch screen, psychologically establishing today’s filmmakers with the false notion that they are physically handling their work.

The digital films of today are made with this paradox heavily in place. An example of this is inherent in the way in which one cinematographer in particular has been experimenting with the medium over the past 15 years – Anthony Dod Mantle. Having worked closely with the pioneers of Dogme 95 cinema during the mid-to-late 90s, Mantle seemed the perfect choice for British director, Danny Boyle, to collaborate with on the 2003 digital apocalyptic film, 28 Days Later. Although he has stated that he ‘saw an artistic, logical justification’ for shooting the film on MiniDV, because of the violent, gritty nature of the film’s subject matter, he has also proceeded to describe his doubts concerning the format.

My main fears at the script-meetings stage concerned where the format might and might not handle it. Those fears are still with me as we go into release, and I see examples of [my concerns] on the final print. I sit in the cinema and think, ‘well I very much would have liked to have shot that particular scene on film as opposed to any digital format.’… I always fear for the variables of quality at the release print stage. The more delicate the negative, the greater the threat of an inaccurate density in final print. Films of digital or electronic origin are always more fragile in this respect. (quoted in Bankston, 2003. p.2)

Mantle’s primary concern with 28 Days Later was anticipating the quality of the film’s distribution, well in advance of its production. This is something that is becoming less of an issue as we enter an era of digital projection within mainstream cinemas, however, the steps that Mantle took towards the production of 28 Days Later are testament to the hostile relationship between the two formats – digital code and celluloid. By applying the use of lens adaptors and focus-wheel systems to compensate for the digital camera’s lack of focus, as well as under-exposing shots in order to accommodate a problem-free transfer to film, it seems almost as if the initial stylistic choice of shooting in MiniDV is a lost battle. The experimental freedom that should be inherent in a format that is as fundamentally flexible as digital is destroyed by its need to oblige celluloid. In this case, all talk of look, or visual texture is futile. As Hadjiouannou states, ‘it would be erroneous to pay attention to the image’s origin at all, because such a quest loses all significance in a fundamentally manipulable
medium….it is more indicative of a flexibility materialized through the actions of a creator’ (Hadjouannou, p. 4). Mantle’s flaw is in his projected perception of what the project will look like on film – it’s in his efforts to cover up the anticipated imperfections within the digital. This is symptomatic, however, of 28 Days Later’s intended demographic – a mainstream audience that expects a certain aesthetic calibre.

During the making of one of Mantle’s previous, more experimental films, the above concerns were practically non-existent. When discussing his work on Harmony Korine’s Julien Donkey-Boy (2000) he says his approach ‘was about decomposing the image: breaking down the official, conventional sharpness we are so used to, losing some detail but finding a texture’ (Hjort & Mackenzie ed., 2003. p. 41). Much like 28 Days Later, Korine’s film is another project concerned with its images’ relation to their subject matter. As a partially biographical piece about the filmmaker’s schizophrenic uncle, Julien Donkey-Boy uses a variety of low resolution, consumer-level digital cameras to depict the multiple perspectives of the protagonist’s mental condition. The film seems to be primarily concerned with audio-visual texture represented in a narrative that is as undisciplined as the images themselves, frequently shifting in and out of focus, up and down in exposure and back and forth from points of view. In this film, Mantle’s practice is the antithesis of 28 Days Later’s intention, which was to ‘degrade the potentially brutal dimension and character of digital imaging.’ (Bankston, p.2) Instead, he is using these brutal dimensions to converse with the film’s narrative in a way that no other format possibly could.

Ultimately, after a century of textural conditioning, it seems only natural that filmmakers would be concerned with this aspect of the image, and in many ways, celluloid still remains as the material albatross around digital cinema’s ethereal neck. After the release of his 2007 film, Inland Empire, David Lynch was unusually vocal about his conversion to the digital, praising not only the format’s accessibility and speed, but also its texture. ‘What I liked about this video was that it reminded me of 1930s films where it wasn’t so sharp and was more impressionistic.’ (quoted in Figgis, 2007, p19) Lynch’s perception of the visual texture of DV sheds light on questions of nostalgia, intention and direction. By approaching digital technology in a textural way, filmmakers are moving forward in technological time but living vicariously in the filmic past, and the exponential leaps that digital video is making, in terms of manipulability are making this post-digital approach more apparent on a day-
to-day basis. Recent work by filmmaker Robert Rodriguez is a prime example. A long-time convert of digital filmmaking, Rodriguez’s recent nostalgia ridden ‘Grindhouse’ release, *Planet Terror* (2007) was shot entirely on High Definition digital cameras but then digitally manipulated to look like old, used and tortured film. Scratches, colour stains and heat bubbles were layered over the existent footage to give the impression that the film was shot, edited and distributed during the mid-to-late 70s. References, however, within the film to the current political climate in the Middle East rest the film squarely within the contemporary time period when it was created. This very process sheds light on the possibilities that digital filmmaking has provided today’s filmmakers with. Technological steps forward are, in one respect, creating a foundation from which filmmakers can not only reference the past, but build their narratives within a filmic past. Audiences can now be given experiences that are seemingly from another decade, not only by the traditional application of mise-en-scene (set design, costume etc.) but also in the way digital textures are applied to the story. As William Gibson has stated, ‘Digital video reminds me of a new platform wrapped in the language and mythology of an old platform’ (Rombes, 2009, p.3).

This growing tendency for a film’s visual texture to be *in conversation* with its narrative has its roots in many of the hybrid digital/analogue films of the 1990s and early 2000s. These films are now retrospectively considered as testament to the difficult transition between material and binary formats, the most commercially successful example being *The Blair Witch Project* (Daniel Myrick & Eduardo Sanchez, 1999), which ‘itself acts as a splice between the analogue and digital eras’ (Rombes, 2009, p.17) and presents a vision ‘as incoherent and hysterical and shaky as its characters’ (Rombes, 2009, p.14). Coincidentally, the vampire genre has made its own contributions to this brief transitional chapter in film history. Two adaptations of *Dracula* (or variations of the Dracula myth), *Nadja* (Michael Almereyda, 1994) and *Dracula: Pages from a Virgin’s Diary* (Guy Maddin, 2002) have spliced film with video in their own respective ways in order to visually tackle the ethereal qualities of the vampire genre. In *Nadja*, Almereyda uses the Fisher Price Pixelvision (PXL-2000) camera with 35mm film in order to represent the ‘vampire’s eye view… taking us out of traditional film stock into a more surreal, otherworldly way of seeing’ (Jeremiah Kipp, 2003). This is particularly effective during scenes where Nadja (who is later revealed to be the daughter of Dracula) places her victims under the vampire spell. As
Kipp describes; ‘Cutting back and forth, often within the same scene, becomes jarring and keeps the viewer slightly disoriented. It’s fitting style for the supernatural film—and also for the self-imposed dreaminess of falling in love, or even the giddy confusion of excessive drinking’ (Jeremiah Kipp, 2003). Using this heavily pixelated, low-resolution video to represent the effects of the undead works as a metaphor in both a technological and narrative sense. The Pixelvision camera draws attention to *Nadja* as a film that is on the verge of the binary in the same manner in which its characters are on the verge of death. Maddin achieves a similar aesthetic effect in his silent ballet adaptation of Stoker’s novel, *Dracula: Pages from a Virgin’s Diary*, by borrowing from the experimental techniques of Cinema’s past. Physical manipulations were applied to the equipment such as smearing Vaseline on the camera lens to evoke a sense of unearthliness. Furthermore, although Maddin’s adaptation was shot entirely on film (8mm & 16mm B/W), its images were re-shot and heavily processed in a digital, non-linear fashion translating its filmic grain into digital grain and further manipulating the image by rotoscoping splashes of colour across the screen. These physical and non-physical processes place Maddin’s *Dracula* in a liminal filmic space between silent and digital cinema, which further accentuates the nature of its bitten protagonist, Lucy (a change in focus from Stoker’s Jonathan).
**Vertical Montage & Idea Space**

In today’s filmmaking environment, a stylistic trend has developed whereby these previously discussed textures, are compiled vertically within the edit. Although this concept (originally coined by Sergei Eisenstein as vertical montage) has existed since the advent of sound in the 1920s, the introduction of non-linear dynamics within post-production has enabled filmmakers to develop their narratives in more than one direction. Within our digital age, meaning is can now be derived from the vertical juxtaposition of image and sound as frequently as it can be horizontally. At the time, Eisenstein’s concept of vertical montage was developed in order to re-evaluate our understanding of montage – the linear (horizontal) juxtaposition of shots to create meaning. As a result of the integration of sound into motion pictures, Eisenstein recognized a shift that was occurring not only in the way people would perceive cinema but also in the way the language of cinema was spoken. He recognized a simultaneity within the syntax of film that was created by the horizontal and vertical juxtaposition of a series of lines, both aural and visual, that he referred to as a super-structure.

From the viewpoint of montage structure, we no longer have a simple horizontal succession of pictures, but now a new “super-structure” is erected vertically over the horizontal picture structure. Piece by piece, these new strips in the “super-structure” differ in length from those in the picture structure, but, needless to say, are equal in total length. (Sergei Eistenstein, 1942, p.78)

As opposed to the silent, linear order before it, film is now viewed in ‘simultaneous order’ as Eisenstein predicted. In the digital age vertical montage has become even more relevant as the super-structure has increased in both usage and potential. Following on from the optical processes of the mechanical age, two strands have evolved in non-linear editing, digital compositing and video mixing. Digital compositing or chroma keying derives from the more physical techniques of the past such as glass-painting, back-projection and matting used in films as far ranging as *Gone with the Wind* (Victor Fleming, 1939) and *Danger: Diabolik* (Mario Bava, 1968), while video mixing follows on from the more abstract multiple exposure techniques used by experimental avant-garde filmmakers such as Malcolm Le Grice and Kenneth Anger. As Holly Willis suggests, the acquisition of non-linear, desktop editing seems to ‘answer the needs of both filmmakers and video artists, many of
whom from the 1960s forward had been working extensively with layered and collaged imagery and text’ (2005, p. 9).

In the post-digital age, experimental approaches to vertical montage, which derive from the avant-garde experiments of the past, have become more common in the multi-layered narratives of the 21st century. One example of this is David Lynch’s *Inland Empire* (2007). As the director’s first foray into digital filmmaking, the film presents the viewer with four simultaneous narratives. Throughout the film, Lynch uses the more traditional technique of parallel editing in order to switch between these stories, which range from myth to dreams to reality. However, for the most part, the film presents a super-structure aesthetic in which many of the narratives are not only occurring simultaneously but also are viewed in a mesh of clashing, muddled imagery. In the case of *Inland Empire*, vertical montage is used as a cognitive aesthetic, which comfortably links the flexibility of its digital images with the idea space of the film’s protagonist, Nikki Grace (played by Laura Dern), and her journey between these different states of being. As Lev Manovich has suggested, ‘this technique can be interpreted as the representation of ideas or mental images floating around in our minds, coming in and out of mental focus’ (2001, p.151). Furthermore, in Korine’s *Julien Donkey-Boy* this technique is used in a similar manner to represent psychological trauma as in one scene, a close-up image of Julien’s abusive father is layered over the film in order to represent the overbearing power that he has over Julien and the rest of his family. In this manner, the layering of digital textures enables filmmakers to reveal the internal narratives of their characters by presenting the viewer with what
Gene Youngblood would describe as a kind of *oceanic consciousness* in which subtext and text are one and the same.

He writes: ‘Synaesthetic cinema is an art of relations; the relations of the conceptual information and design information within film itself graphically, and the relation between the film and viewer at that point where human perception (sensation and conceptualization) brings them together’ He continues, explaining that this cinema often fuses ‘inside’ and ‘outside by reducing depth of field to create a ‘total field of non-focused multiplicity’ and insists that by creating a new kind of vision’, this synaesthetic cinema ‘creates a new kind of consciousness’, namely ‘oceanic consciousness.’ (Holly Willis, 2005, p.9)

This ability to bring subtext to the surface can be seen in a variety of work from video art to mainstream cinema. Experimental UK artists Semiconductor, for instance, have used *vertical montage* to visualise the sounds of seismic shifts deep within the Earth’s core on the surface of the world in their film, *All the Time in the World* (2005). At the same time, Robert Rodriguez’s *Planet Terror* (2007), uses its aesthetic of filmic scratches, heat bubbles and hairs to represent the intensity of it characters’ diseased bodies. The more manipulated the image becomes; the more mutated the film’s characters become.

*Fig 12.*  

*All the Time in the World* (Semiconductor, 2005)  

*Planet Terror* (Rodriguez, 2007)
Post-Digital Aesthetics in Here Lies Lucy

During the post-production process of *Here Lies Lucy: A Vampire Yarn*, many of the choices that I made were largely concerned with texture and my attempt to come to terms with the immaterial aspect of the medium that I was working with. During the entire production, I was aware that there was no way of transcending these paradoxes that have been previously discussed concerning the image. Therefore, I was determined to create a sense, much like in *Nadja* and *Dracula: Pages from a Virgin’s Diary*, that the technology that I was using to create my narrative was also simultaneously in conversation with itself. This plan was developed at an early stage with the intention to depict two prominent narrative strands. One would contain the historical and mythological elements of the Stoker-influenced vampire tale: the meetings between Lucy and her psychotherapist, Dr. Seward. The other would represent the modern day: Jonathan’s life, previously unaffected by this myth/legend. Technology would be the means by which these narratives would intersect. The textual form of the diary entry, which Bram Stoker used to weave his narrative together, would be replaced by a digital texture. This would be represented by the use of the Final Cut Pro plugin, *Bad TV*. What this digital effect does is enable the filmmaker to degrade the image in a variety of specific ways. One can manipulate scan lines, waves and grain in
order to decompose the sharpness of the image. The effect can also be key-framed over time, controlling the intensity of the effect from scene to scene. This plugin worked particularly well at times where the image’s quality was already vulnerable – out of focus or overexposed – further adding to the camera’s imperfections. Bad TV would be rendered onto any bit of the narrative that was linked with the vampire myth within the film. Therefore, during moments when the two narratives would intersect -- for instance, when Renfield meets Jonathan -- it would seem as if the Lucy/Dr. Seward narrative were physically invading Jonathan’s narrative. Also, by using this effect on certain characters like Renfield, the audience would get the impression that this character was either a remnant of or somehow involved in Lucy’s story.

Another textural interaction, as I have discussed in relation to the historical Dracula, is the use of lino prints. These still images serve as chapter bookends for the sequences that take place between Lucy and Dr. Seward and also serve as evidence that I have made the effort to interact physically with the story I created. The approach would be to export the first and last frame from each of these sequences, then project these frames onto a piece of lino. I would proceed to trace the image onto the lino, keeping with the contrasting dark and light areas of the image. I would then carve out the light sections and print the image onto a piece of paper, which would then be scanned back into the computer and imported into the editing program to be matched up with its original frame. This complicated process was an effort to pin down the digital image and give it a materiality that it doesn’t have. And even if the simple act of scanning the print back into the computer defeats the purpose, an interesting side effect of this process was how it made me feel personally closer to my work. It was as if the hands-on approach of carving the image out of lino was a more human process than the clicking of a mouse. This was a feeling that I could only
imagine was representative of the process of handling film. This material approach was extended to another transitional part of the film. As Here Lies Lucy replaced the diary entries and written letters of the original Dracula with emails and Youtube-esque video players, I felt it would serve as an interesting comment on the material communication processes of the past if the Internet in Here Lies Lucy were made out of card and paper. This post-digital aesthetic would be achieved through both material and digital processes. Layers of card would be physically animated, frame by frame, in order to mimic the look and functionality of email sign-in pages, inboxes and online video players with buffer wheels and loading bars. Following this process, I would apply digital effects and layers to the image in order to computerise the paper aesthetic. Bad TV would be used, but I would also implement motion graphics to complete some of the functional elements such as the mouse/cursor and the scaling-in of the video.

Throughout the film, I would also focus on the layering of these digital textures and material/binary interactions in order to bring some of the film’s subtext to the surface. This vertical montage process would also be used in a subtle manner when approaching a specific character, Renfield. As a character that has such strong links with Stoker’s original text, I wanted to visualize his connection to the mythological parts of Here Lies Lucy while still enabling him to exist within the more modern sections of the narrative. As previously discussed, this would be achieved by layering a Bad TV, Glitch aesthetic over his character to give the impression that he was an unstable element within Jonathan’s story. However, this technique would also
bring Renfield’s internal narrative to the fore by presenting his mentally unstable character as digitally unstable. Depending on his mood, Renfield would on occasion, jump out of his own body or waver for a brief moment. This brought an ambiguity to his character, presenting him as construct of Jonathan’s imagination (a hallucination brought on by being bitten), a ghost and a mad tramp.

In a less subtle manner, Lucy’s story would on occasion, morph into layered imagery, which would at first seem abstract, but upon further examination provide the viewer detailed images relating to the character’s state of mind. Myth, memories, dreams, past, present and future would be layered together in one simultaneous super-structure. This would not only give the viewer a deeper understanding of the psychology of the characters, but it enabled me to reference the multi-layered nature of the vampire myth, both in history and literature as in a digitextual manner, these tales would be embedded into my own film.
**TERA TOMA: ADAPTING THE META-NARRATIVE**

**Myth and the Data-Cloud**

Information technologies – which have reached a kind of dizzying height during the past several years with the phenomena of interactive, real-time, social networking sites such as *Myspace*, *Facebook* and *Twitter* – have not only changed the way we gain knowledge and interact socially, but also the way we experience story. Today, each film, TV show, book and theatre performance that is released upon the public is followed (or in many cases preceded) by a cloud of data comprising of *tweets, blogs, vlogs, texts, viral campaigns* and other containers of fact or opinion. Our cinema experience is now, largely to do with how we traverse this cloud of information and how it affects our engagement with film on a meta-narrative level. The narrative itself – the specifics of the plot – have melded together with the circumstances surrounding it, not only in the filmic world of its own existence but also in the real and virtual world that it penetrates. As a result, the speed and accessibility of information technology has made it difficult for cinema to retain an air of mystery about its processes. We all know, or have the instant potential of knowing how a film is made, from the science behind its creation, through to the methods that the actors employ in its performance and the elements of the story that are left on the cutting room floor.

In his book, *Cinema in the Digital Age*, Nicholas Rombes (2009) states that recent popular films, such as *Being John Malkovich* (Spike Jonze, 1999), *Memento* (Christopher Nolan, 2000) and *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* (Michel Gondry, 2004) are ‘really about the process of [their] own storytelling’ and that ‘we can no longer simply dismiss these meta-textual digressions as ‘postmodern parlour tricks’ because these ‘tricks’ in fact constitute the narrative itself.’ (Rombes, p. 18) In more recent years this concept has extended beyond the frame in which the narrative is contained. In 2005, independent filmmakers Arin Crumley and Susan Buice produced a film that perfectly demonstrates meta-narrative as narrative. *Four Eyed Monsters*, which incorporates both archive footage and filmed reconstructions, tells the story of the birth and death of Crumley and Buice’s relationship through the conception, execution and distribution of their co-directed film. The story of the film is the story of their relationship – and vice versa.
They say when you are trying to learn a new language you should fall in love with someone who speaks that language. Digital media is simply a new language and we fell in love through it and in doing so became more articulate and clear with our media skills which then lead naturally to becoming filmmakers and expressing ourselves to the rest of the world telling our story. (Crumley and Buice, [www.foureyedmonsters.com](http://www.foureyedmonsters.com))

The film starts with the couple meeting online through a social networking site, exchanging video diaries with each other, which soon expand into the making of a feature film, ending with the film itself being accepted into *Slamdance Film Festival*. This, however, is not where the *Four Eyed Monsters* narrative ends. The couple’s subsequent failure to achieve sales or distribution led to a series of 13 video podcasts, which continued the story by showing how the film was overpowering their real-life relationship and how difficult it is, despite having a critically well received film, to achieve theatrical distribution in the United States. As a result, the film began to evolve into an independent DIY distribution phenomenon where audiences became not only part of the interactive process of getting the film screened, but also part of the ongoing story. Crumley and Buice would meet audience members as they toured with their film and in some instances, the audience would find themselves featured in a *Four Eyed Monsters* episode, due merely to the fact that they had now become part of the story of the film, and by connotation, a part of the Crumley/Buice love affair.

The relative success of the film is largely due to the accessibility and immediacy of the technology, which not only gave Crumley and Buice the ability to produce and distribute an ongoing story with the necessary speed, but it also gave the film’s narrative the ability to evolve in an interdisciplinary manner. What began as a relatively straightforward meta-textual docu-drama about a relationship, has mutated and filtered through other media and has re-constituted itself as a cloud of data – a series of videos, blogs and inter-exchanged comments on Youtube, Second Life, iTunes, and Myspace – and now continues in 140 character discussions on the Internet. As stated on the *Four Eyed Monsters* website, ‘you can also follow the continued real time story that never ends via Twitter.’

This interplay between narrative and meta-narrative, that has begun to play a major part in the way that we watch, tell and sell stories, is indicative of what Graeme Harper (2007) refers to as the *Cinema of Complexity* – ‘the condition of film in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries in which the form itself is no longer film, as it was once understood, but a complex interaction of no longer mechanical
production techniques and their attendant human readings and responses.’ (Harper, p.143) This concept is similar, perhaps, to how we view myth in the digital age – a time in which the stories of the past (fictional or non-fictional) are not only archived and given a meaning within the present, but also conjoined with the circumstances surrounding their conception and reception. What *Four Eyed Monsters* has shown us, is that by compressing time, technology has enabled filmmakers to go beyond the singular act of creating content by creating their own myths (see appendix). As Rombes states, ‘cultural coherence and shared meaning occurs not at the level of content, but rather the level of interface’ (Rombes p.119), and in this way, the computer (the interface of our digital age) has enabled the creation of myth on a large and immediate scale. The journey of story from birth to myth, of everyday people to folkloric icons, is more common and instantaneous than ever before.

With this in mind, the question becomes: has the very nature of adapting the stories and myths of the past changed? Much in the same way that content is manipulated today, the stories of the past have, over a considerably longer amount of time, been re-directed and re-written by successive publics and technologies in order to ‘fit the modern experience’ (Frayling, 1996 p.13) – and in some ways shape it. Information technology has enabled us to view the texts of the past in the context of all that has preceded and succeeded them – instantly. Therefore, it is possible that the process of adaptation is now largely involved in the re-writing or re-directing of the ‘modern experience’ that surrounds the original texts of the past – a complex, layered, post-digital process in which the human experience of a story can be archived in the digital.

One of the texts that I have focused on in my PhD, Robert Louis Stevenson’s *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, is a fitting example of this. Through time, the novel and its subsequent readings/mis-readings in a variety of different mediums, has shaped the way that we view a range of subjects from modern horror (in particular, the psychological thriller) to evolution. This chapter will discuss the conception, experimentation, execution, impact and mutation of the original text. It will also discuss the re-working of the original text and its readings in my second PhD film *Tera Toma* and by doing so, propose a methodology for adapting the (deceased) texts of the past for the post-digital age – a way of re-directing the myths and meta-narratives of past centuries in order to fit the post-digital experience.
Published in 1885, The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde came to be seen as a revolutionary publication of its time. Never before had there been a novel that bridged the gap between up-market and down-market literature. This was not only due to the accessible size and price of the publication, but the subject matter. It contained themes that were prominent during the 1880s among writers who were grappling ‘with a consciousness of themselves as artists and as people and reflected on late Victorian ‘dualities’, such as public/private, inner/outer, masculine/feminine and the beast in man.’ (Frayling, p.166) It was a book that perfectly reflected the era of its publication as well as preempts the mark that would be made by its recurring themes in the upcoming 20th century.

Unlike Stoker’s Dracula (published ten years later), Stevenson’s novel, although very similar in it’s mosaic-like structure, was not the result of years of meticulous research. Like the digital stories of today, Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde was an apparent exercise in immediacy, conceived partially in a dream and written in an expeditious manner – a fact that has become part of the myth of the novel’s making.

In March 1886, Stephenson wrote that Jekyll was conceived, written and printed inside ten weeks (which was a bit of an exaggeration), and he told a reporter for the San Francisco Examiner in June 1888 that it was drafted in three days ‘and written in 6 weeks’ – a very long time instead to sustain a serious attack of ‘feverish’ automatic writing. (Frayling, p. 149-150)

The book’s swift publication is due, perhaps, to the personal and social nature of the novel’s main themes and conjured images, which can be traced back as far as Stevenson’s childhood, where he spent (similar to Stoker) many long periods of time sick in bed. The events that permeated this period of illness were an amalgamation of social and personal traumas for the young Stevenson – myths that he would find himself linked to as part of a moral game played by his nurse. During this time, his only view would be that of the world outside of his window and the furniture that surrounded him in his room. At the foot of his bed, in particular, stood a cabinet made by the notorious carpenter, Deacon Brody – a man who was renowned for the double life that he led as a burglar. In his sick bed, Stevenson’s nurse would apparently embellish upon the myth of Brody in order to incite fear in the young boy, a fear that would later evolve into a fixation as he grew older. These tales of fire and brimstone that were told to Stevenson during his youth had a profound effect on the author’s
subconscious - in particular, his nightmares, which he referred to as ‘brownies’. When Stevenson himself described the nightmare that sparked *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* he said that ‘all I dreamed about Dr. Jekyll was that one man was being pressed into a cabinet, when he swallowed a drug and changed into another being.’ (Frayling, p.124) Both Brody’s cabinet and the dream made their way into Stevenson’s novel where there is a strong focus on both the change that Dr. Jekyll undertakes, and his confined living quarters. The myth of Deacon Brody’s cabinet merges with Stevenson’s tale during one particularly chilling instance within the book when Mr. Utterson (a close friend of Dr Jekyll) fears that Jekyll has been murdered by the infamous Mr. Hyde (before the discovery that they are one and the same) and are under the fearful impression he is hiding in the Doctor’s cabinet. In fact, many of the fears that are expressed by Mr. Utterson in the novel are parallel with those of Stevenson himself. This is expressed in Mr. Utterson’s retelling of a dream that he had of Hyde – a dream that is very close in its description to the nightmare that triggered the novel itself.

…he would see a room in a rich house, where his friend lay asleep, dreaming and smiling at his dreams; and then the door of that room would be opened, the curtains of the bed plucked apart, the sleeper recalled and lo! There by his side a figure to whom power was given… (Stevenson, p14)

The transference of power is one of the many strong themes reiterated throughout the book, and it is reinforced visually by an attention to architectural and social detail – a skill that was adapted by Stevenson during his years as a student. Much like in Utterson’s dream, Stevenson’s novel is littered with references to doorways. Both entrances and exits serve as a consistent reminder (or premonition) of the revelation of Dr. Jekyll’s dual character. In particular, Stevenson’s description of Jekyll’s house serves as a strong hint at this reveal. As part of a ‘square of ancient, handsome houses’, it is a far cry from the rear entrance, which Stevenson reserves for Hyde’s comings and goings.

It was two storeys high; showed no window, nothing but a door on the lower story and a blind forehead of discoloured wall on the upper; and bore in every feature, the marks of prolonged and sordid negligence. The door, which was equipped with neither bell nor locker, was blistered and distained. (Stevenson, p. 3)

This architectural dichotomy stems from Stevenson’s youth as well. Attributable to its layout, Edinburgh itself was a constant reminder of humanity’s strained balance between darkness and light, and as a student, Stevenson would frequent the dark
underbelly of Edinburgh’s Old Town whilst studying in the more affluent, New Town. He was all too aware of the city’s double existence, stating that it was ‘half a capital, half a country town’ (Frayling p. 127), and it was possibly due to the combination of his social and academic experiences within this environment that helped nurture the seed that was planted in his dreams as a young boy - a nightmare that would eventually spill over onto the pages of his novel – the idea that one could lead a double life of darkness and light.

As an undergraduate, Stevenson ‘kept having what he called a strange ‘dream adventure’, in which he would spend his days working in a surgical theatre ‘his heart in his mouth, his teeth on edge, seeing monstrous malformities and the abhorred dexterity of surgeons, and his nights climbing a never-ending staircase somewhere in the Old Town, in wet clothes, watching a parade of down-and-outs descending the stairs past him.’ (Frayling p.132) With this in mind, it is apparent Stevenson’s thoughts at the time of reaching adulthood must have been perfectly in tune with the paranoid, social and even scientific setting of his book.

A Dark Science

Outside of Stevenson’s personal experiences and social observations, Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde came at the end of an era imbued with the birthing pains of modern surgery. Nearly a century of seemingly criminal practice had ensued since the turn of the 19th century, where the act of body snatching became commonplace amongst the scientific elite. It was an epidemic of illegal activity brought on by both the rising popularity of medical science, and the inadequate quantity of authorized cadavers made available for anatomic research. Public knowledge of this situation was widespread, partially due to high profile arrests like that of Burke and Hare, the murderous Edinburgh-based resurrectionists who would later be the basis for one of Stevenson’s other stories, The Body Snatcher. There was also, however, an even more prominent personality behind this hub of grave-digging activity, John Hunter, a surgeon who is now renowned as a pioneer and precursor to Darwin, but at the time could be seen as a precursor to Dr Jekyll.

In the recent biography of John Hunter, The Knife Man, author Wendy Moore (2005) links Stevenson’s novel to this dark period of scientific history. Like Jekyll, Hunter was a scientist torn between two worlds, the aristocratic social elite of his time
and the criminal underbelly of London. Unlike Jekyll, however, this was not through some psychological urgency. According to Moore, ‘the boom in private anatomy schools and the continental gravitation of medical students to the capital generated relentless demand for dissection material.’ (Moore, p. 461) Therefore, Hunter’s practice turned dubious more so through professional desperation. This is not to say, however, that certain decisions he made as a scientist went without protest. In one instance, Hunter decided to make public the broad collection of specimens that he had amassed over years of research. This was seen by his scientific peers as going ‘too far’. (Moore, p. 464)

It was this idea of the progressive scientist that no doubt had an impact on the characterisation of Jekyll. After all, the novel’s publication did come at a time where scientists were depicted in fiction as being overly curious, or going too far (i.e. Frankenstein, Dr. Seward). Suffering from illness for most of his life, Stevenson also had a keen interest in the research and breakthroughs in medical science:

…there were, in fact, various strands of contemporary scientific research which could have stimulated Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde. Where Dr Jekyll’s experiment was concerned, there were the very recent discoveries in germ theory and immunization, which had created the impression in the popular press that ‘the doctors’ could do almost anything (…) He was also writing at a time when psychology was still thought to be a matter for the doctors. (Frayling, p. 140)

In fact, the main connection that has been made between Jekyll and Hunter has very much to do with scientific obsession that led to breakthrough. In 1785, Hunter purchased a new property that would successfully meld his personal and professional life together. Centred in Leicester Square, the property consisted of two houses. One, a smart looking town house, facing out on the square itself, as the other less extravagant looking residence, facing back out onto Castle Street. The two properties were conjoined in the middle by a courtyard and lecture theatre - designed in this manner so that Hunter could keep up his appearances as a respectable surgeon, while streamlining his access (via Castle Street) to the resurrectionists that supplied his cadavers. This only further reinforced his persona as ‘the Jekyll and Hyde of the Georgian period, offering his patients a dramatic cure one moment and dragging them off to his dissecting bench the next.’ (Moore, p. 433) This Leicester Square property was the basis for the Jekyll/Hyde property in Stevenson’s book (Moore, p. 431), a fact
that further reinforces Stevenson’s decision to set the novel in London instead of Edinburgh despite the strong influence the Scottish city made on his work.

The Theatre of Jack the Ripper

This Edinburgh-flavored London that Stevenson created made a visual impact on the future of modern horror in plays, films, comic books and television shows. Coupled with the true crimes that occurred throughout London during the time of it’s first adaptation to the stage, Stevenson’s story and depiction of the city would also go on to shape our perception of the Victorian era and the evil depths which men could plumb. ‘The theme of “man’s double being” (as Stevenson himself put it) had reached the high street like a juggernaut.’ (Frayling, p. 116) It struck a chord with the public, who were – according to the book’s sales - ready for a work that revealed all about the nature of their society, albeit metaphorical. Within a year of its publication, Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde had sold close to 39000 copies in Great Britain, a staggering quantity for the time, which swiftly prompted a theatrical adaptation in the United States in 1887.

Despite staying true to the novel’s main themes, Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde’s transition from print to stage neglected the original text’s broader range of characters and perspectives and focused more on the psychologically personal elements of Jekyll’s fall from grace. This was perhaps due to the prevailing mark that the novel’s conclusion had on its readers at the time of publication. ‘When summarizing the plot, most published reviews concentrated on the straightforward single-point-of-view chapter called Henry Jekyll’s full statement of the case (the last fifth of the text). They ignored the perspectives of his fellow bachelors.’(Frayling, p.122) The novel’s chilling and climactic revelation overshadowed all that led up to it, thus changing subsequent adaptations to involve, much more, the perspective of Jekyll. The shift to this more subjective point of view came with the first staging of the play by Russell Sullivan (1887), who had taken it upon himself to go against Stevenson’s warning that an adaptation would be a ‘difficult undertaking.’(Frayling, p.153) Nevertheless, the narrative changes that Sullivan instigated brought even more focus to the transformation scene in the third act, a move that apparently satisfied Stevenson and successfully tackled the multi-layered nature of the book by turning ‘narrative into action.’ (Frayling, p.153)
Stevenson’s positive reaction to the play may have come as a surprise to some as the shift to a more subjective focus on the Jekyll character led to a number of controversial narrative and character changes. Out of a novel almost entirely populated by male bachelors, the play bore Jekyll a girlfriend, and thus Mr Hyde a motive. Although all the chills and thrills were preserved, this shifted the ambiguous nature of the story towards a more binary melodrama, where Hyde was no longer the physical manifestation of Jekyll’s deepest, darkest desires, but an entirely different entity of pure evil, committing crimes of jealous rage against the girlfriend’s family. ‘But the most important change arose from the fact that [Richard] Mansfield himself played both Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde – founding a tradition, the way of presenting the story, which survives even today.’ (Frayling, p.153) Due to the physical difference described between Jekyll and Hyde in the book, it would have been much easier (technically) to use two different actors in the play. This, however, reinforced that Victorian idea that everyone had a doppelganger within – a theory that would frighten people as the play merged with the real life events of 1888.

Within only two years of the novel’s publication, *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* had already been thematically re-written for a more public audience, and when Sullivan and Mansfield’s stage version reached the London theatres in August 1888, an unexpected series of events would further convolute Stevenson’s original vision. During the play’s first run, five women were severely mutilated and murdered in and around Whitechapel by the unknown killer the press coined ‘Jack the Ripper’. The public hysteria and conspiracies surrounding these unsolved murders melded together in the public’s consciousness with the play’s reception. Was the Ripper influenced by the play? Was he in the audience? Was he, in fact, Richard Mansfield? ‘As it happened, the first of the murders occurred at precisely the same time as Sullivan’s play running in the West End.’ (Frayling, p. 158) Therefore, this third conspiracy could not have worked, but it did draw attention to the ways in which Stevenson’s subject matter was inherently fused with the times. Following the Victorian era’s continuing suspicions about foul science, Jack the Ripper was even suspected at times to be a doctor. A situation that was perhaps worsened by Stevenson’s sensational text, ‘the medical profession – the so-called “new priesthood” which put health before morals – was getting a particularly bad press, with accusations of needless cruelty and high-handedness; of knife-happy surgeons taking advantage of vulnerable women in front of leering medical students.’ (Frayling, p. 158) Coincidentally, the Ripper
murders and the conspiracies that surrounded seemed to follow on from some of the narrative changes that were made to Stevenson’s original text. In both instances, women were being portrayed as potential victims. While this was a true situation in the case of the Ripper, the crimes that occur throughout *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* are largely against men and/or children and are more randomised. The very nature of *Mr Hyde’s* crimes are also different from the knife-wielding, surgeon-like precision of the Ripper’s. Despite these differences, however, Sullivan’s play was terminated in its 10th week ‘due to accusations that the play had encouraged these heinous acts.’ (George Turner, 1999) The damage had been done. The meaning and narrative behind *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* had, within just two years, been rewritten and redirected by both circumstance and the difficult transition to another medium. In this same tradition, Stevenson’s tale would continue to evolve and be redirected in the coming century through a new medium – film.

**A Tradition of Experimentation**

Inevitably, the cinematic history that surrounds the Jekyll and Hyde story is one of continued experimentation. The original text’s early adaptations all grappled with the advances of film technology in order to bring Stevenson’s tale of duality to life in the most fantastical yet visually realistic ways possible. As a result, while the changes in plot that were instigated with the theatrical adaptation remained, an even greater focus was put on the subjective nature of the book’s final chapter as representative of the whole of the story. The early adaptations, from Universal’s 1913 silent to MGM’s 1941 version, were integral contributions to the development of a visual language inherent in the psychological thriller sub-genre. This was due to the technological innovations that coincided with the filmmakers’ focus on the subjectivity of Jekyll’s character as well as the transformation that the actors playing Jekyll needed to undertake physically.

One particular adaptation known for its progressive visual approach is Rouben Mamoulian’s 1932 version starring Fredric March. At the time of acquiring the option to direct the film, Mamoulian was renowned by his peers for his experimental, groundbreaking flare as a director. His first film in 1930, *Applause*, was well known for restoring ‘camera mobility and was the first to use two channels of sound.’ His second, *City Streets* (1931), was one of the first films to ‘introduce the
concept of having thoughts heard as voice-overs.’ (Turner, 1999) Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde would continue this tradition of experimentation in a variety of different ways. With this film in particular, Mamoulian collaborated with the cinematographer, Karl Struss, well known at the time for his academy award winning work on the innovative Sunrise (Murnau, 1927). This collaboration proved fruitful, particularly when it came to the camera’s interpretation of the major themes in Stevenson’s original publication. When speaking about his work on Mamoulian’s film and the role of the cinematographer, Struss noted the following.

Another point where cinematographer and director must be perfectly agreed is the mood of the photography which best suits the picture . . . Some demand photography that stresses the romantic elements — soft, delicate pictorialism. Others, like Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, demand virile, realistic, almost brutal treatment. (Turner, Ibid)

This approach is certainly apparent, with the film containing only 47.5% static shots (Cormack, 1994, p.64), an unusually low quantity during an age of heavy equipment and high technical demands for sound recording. This mobile approach added, like today’s ever-popular hand held cinematography, a more realistic tone to the film, which needed to lull its audience into an empathetic relationship with Dr Jekyll, thus creating an even more shocking climax. Movement is frequent throughout the film and is always in relation to the movement of the characters, so much so that it often seems as if the audience has been placed in the scene. Mamoulian and Struss pushed this approach further with the recurring use of point of view shots, particularly during moments of transformation and during the film’s opening sequence, where this subjective technique is used for close to five minutes – ‘one of the most sustained uses of the subjective camera in American cinema before The Lady in the Lake (Robert Montgomery, 1946)’ (Cormack, p. 65).

Introducing the film through the eyes of Dr Jekyll, Mamoulian and Struss put the audience immediately into the mindset of the story’s seemingly innocent protagonist. In this sequence, which is (despite the inclusion of cuts) presented as real-time, the camera pans back and forth from Jekyll’s hands playing an organ to Mr. Poole (Jekyll’s butler) who arrives to alert him of his appointment at University. The subjective point of view is reinforced through the use of a claustrophobic vignette around the edge of the frame as well as the clever inclusion of a shadow cast (from off-camera) by Jekyll’s head onto the musical score.
As Jekyll gets up and walks through the house, the audience remains in his point of view until we see Jekyll reflected in a mirror. In this final shot before he exits the house, Jekyll examines himself as Poole fetches his coat. This mirror shot was successfully executed by placing Frederic March (Jekyll) on the other side of a false wall, addressing the camera as if it were his reflection. Although by the standards of the time, this was quite effective, by today’s standards, this is where the opening sequence presents us with an interesting flaw. As Jekyll turns to leave, the camera remains momentarily with the mirror, breaking the illusion that the audience is still sharing the protagonist’s point of view. Due to the fact the camera proceeds to pan and dolly out of the building without Jekyll in front of it, this can be quite clearly seen as a mistake – albeit an accidentally metaphorical one where Jekyll has turned away from himself. Watching the film today, this often-flawed technique brings a certain level of crude self-reflexivity to the story, which only reinforces the major themes of Stevenson’s original work. As an audience, we are and are not Jekyll in the same way as Jekyll is and is not Hyde.

The tradition of using a single actor to play both Jekyll and Hyde added to the strain put upon filmmakers to make Jekyll’s metamorphosis into Hyde as frightening and believable as possible. On stage, where this tradition began, the transformation was acted out by Richard Mansfield, who was assisted by various lighting and make-up techniques in order to execute the scene.
When interviewed (as he was, many times), Mansfield refused to divulge his trade secret. He seems to have altered his posture from an upright position, to an ape-like crouch; his sensitive fingers were curled into claws; his voice went from normal to guttural (or ‘irritating’) and the volume went up; and by use of coloured lights and make-up – especially magenta reflected on to green, with gels being slowly introduced to the electric lights – he managed to change the shape of his face. All of which took place behind a gauze curtain. (Frayling, p. 154)

At the time, the realistic nature of his performance, despite its theatrics, was apparently so powerful that certain members of his audience were convinced of his involvement in the Ripper murders (Frayling, p.158). This multi-layered experiment combining lights, gels, make-up and performance was very much the basis for the way the Jekyll/Hyde transformation would be approached in its subsequent film adaptations. A ‘dissolving-effect’ (introduced by King Baggot’s 1913 silent version) would permeate all adaptations up to and including some of Mamoulian’s version (Turner, 1999). Although the layering of imagery and cross-dissolves were very much at the heart of Mamoulian and Struss’ adaptation, they had a different approach for Jekyll’s first transformation into Mr Hyde. In this scene, Jekyll stands in front of his laboratory mirror (much like in the film’s opening sequence), drinks his potion and proceeds to seamlessly transform before the camera. This was achieved through the use of panchromatic film and coloured filters, a technique that Struss had previously developed to depict the ‘healing of the lepers in Ben-Hur (Fred Niblo, 1926)’ (Turner, 1999) and which he describes in the following statement.

I had begun using panchromatic film, which is sensitive to all colors. The leprosy spots were red makeup, which registered when shot through a green filter, but when we gradually moved a red filter over the lens, the makeup disappeared. The Hyde makeup was also in red and didn't show at all when the
red filter was on the lens, but when the filter was moved down very slowly to the green, Mr. Hyde appeared. (Turner, 1999)

This live, single take was very much the embodiment of what had begun with Mansfield forty years earlier – a cinematic technique that in no way drew attention to itself in the way that a dissolve would – and therefore, combined with the nature of the shot, the audience was placed in the most subjective position possible, by going through the transformation themselves.

This was, however, not where Mamoulian’s and Struss’ experimentation ended. In total, Jekyll and Hyde transform six times throughout the course of the film and each change is distinct from the previous. Following Stevenson’s description of Hyde as ‘troglodytic’, Mamoulian made March’s appearance become more ape-like as the film progressed, as if he were devolving. Despite Struss’ objection to this unsubtle approach, this effect worked thematically and viscerally with the film’s audience. It reinforced the Darwinian themes introduced in Stevenson’s original text and kept Hyde’s appearance from becoming ‘too familiar.’ (Turner, ibid) Thus making Hyde’s final, post-mortal transformation back into Jekyll, all the more effective. This itself, due to the sheer amount of make-up involved, was an even more experimental challenge than Struss’ panchromatic technique.

Cornered in his laboratory, Jekyll becomes Hyde in a series of nine dissolving close-ups that are smoother because there is little movement in the scene. The last metamorphosis — the death of Hyde — is also exposed in profile. A dozen 8 x 10 plates captured by Frank Bjerring with a Graflex were rephotographed onto movie film and connected by dissolves. (Turner, 1999)
Throughout the film, there is a strong emphasis on this layering of image, both as a post-production technique as well as something that is attempted in camera. Double exposures and long dissolves are frequent, and especially prominent during moments where the film attempts to immerse the viewer in Jekyll’s paranoid, guilty state of mind. This ‘inventive use of long dissolves retains ghostly imagery of one scene in the next, in order to convey the notion that the former event remains in the doctor’s tormented mind.’ (Turner, 1999) These events that get picked up throughout the film are repeated in Jekyll’s mind as he changes into Hyde as if the pressure of his guilt and sexual repression is what facilitates the transformation – spilling the plethora of Jekyll’s anxieties into the frame.

In fact, it is frequently the image of the women in Jekyll’s life (his fiancè Muriel and mistress Ivy) that get displayed in this liminal space. Thus, Muriel's face holds well into the sequence of Jekyll walking with Lanyon. After Jekyll's erotic encounter in Ivy's bedroom, the parting visual of her bare leg swinging from the bed remains for some 25 seconds while Jekyll good-naturedly parries Lanyon's rebukes. A similar application is made of diagonal and vertical transitional wipes, which pause halfway to let opposing scenes play simultaneously — such as separate shots of Ivy and Muriel, the two women Jekyll desires. (Turner, 1999)

The inclusion of Muriel and Ivy in Mamoulian’s version of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde is a tradition that all of the cinematic adaptations of Stevenson’s text have adhered to over the years. Instigated by Sullivan’s stage play, the shift of focus from social allegory to a metaphor for sexual repression has redirected the initial intention of the text. As Frayling states, ‘virtually every adaptation of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde since that time – including the film versions with John Barrymore (1920), Fredric March (1932), Spencer Tracey (1941) and Boris Karloff (1953 – in Abbott and Costello meet Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde) – has followed the outlines of Sullivan’s adaptation, with variations to suit the temper of the times.’ (Frayling, p.154) However, whether playing God or fulfilling his seedy desires, the treatment of Jekyll’s character on stage
and in film has always involved this strong focus on the subjective nature of his mental state – a focus that I continue to implement in my own adaptation, Tera Toma while simultaneously referencing the changes that have been made to the original text, as I shall now go on to explain.

**A Framework for Adaptation**

In the same tradition of previous filmic adaptations of *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, my own film *Tera Toma* is not strictly an adaptation of Stevenson’s original text, but is in fact an adaptation of the meta-narrative that surrounds the genesis of the publication and it’s subsequent alterations through various mediums. The initial inspiration to make *Tera Toma* came while I was in the middle of the production process of my first PhD film project, *Here Lies Lucy: A Vampire Yarn*. At the time, a TV modernisation of Stevenson’s book entitled, *Jekyll* (BBC, 2007), starring James Nesbitt was broadcast. Written by Stephen Moffat, the series was aimed at the more adult Saturday night *Doctor Who* demographic and it involved elements of science fiction as well as horror. What piqued my interest in the series were the means by which Moffat attempted to fit the Jekyll and Hyde myth into our contemporary society. In the series, the protagonist, Dr. Tom Jackman, was the genetic descendent of the original Mr. Hyde, who was a Ripper-like-character and real-life inspiration behind Stevenson’s publication. It was strongly hinted at throughout the TV programme, that the transformation from Jekyll to Hyde was initially brought on by advances in science (much like in the original novel), however, they affected Jekyll at a genetic level, leaving traces of Hyde in his descendents’ DNA. In my view, this was an interesting attempt at creating a new Jekyll and Hyde myth for the 21st century. It involved, not only a genetic explanation behind Hyde’s appearance, but an attempt to incorporate the genesis of Stevenson’s original novel (however false) into the plot itself. The series was self-reflexive in its attempt to create something new out of a story that had been diluted by over a century of misdirection. It had adaptation, in the evolutionary sense of the word, as the centre of its focus. The series also had an awareness of modern technology and the effect that it would have on the characters if they existed today. Upon discovering each other’s existence, Jackman and Hyde begin to interact with each other through the use of technology. They leave messages on video cameras and Dictaphones, rivaling each other over space and time. Often upon
awakening, Hyde finds himself handcuffed to a chair as Jackman finds a threatening audio message left in his pocket. This game, plays out during each character’s sleep until eventually the two begin to work together when a larger, more threatening conspiracy comes into play.

Having never previously read *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, my only knowledge of the story came from adaptations like the BBC’s *Jekyll*, where the focus of the reworking was not on plot detail, but on the essence of the characters involved. It was clear to me, once I had read the original that the narrative had changed over time. The way that Moffat had incorporated, to various degrees, the characters’ interactions with technology as well as a more modern understanding of the Jekyll/Hyde myth, inspired me to think about how I would attempt to modernize the story myself. After all, it seemed a natural step to take after using technology to a similar degree in *Here Lies Lucy*, where various narrative threads would interact and intersect by way of digital interface.

The main issue I knew I would face by adapting *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, would be to overcome the common knowledge that the two characters were one and the same. It was apparent that most of the damage caused by the numerous versions of the story was to do with the widespread knowledge of the book’s final revelation, irrespective of whether or not people had actually read the original novel. Therefore, in order to bring new life to the text I would need to return to the origins of the original novel and discover not only the inspiration behind the initial publication, but its public reception and the changes that it undertook as it was adapted to stage and film. In some way, my film would need to reference these discoveries while attempting to contribute something new to the already established myth.

**Re-Creating the Nightmare**

As previously stated, the genesis of *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* stemmed from Stevenson’s personal traumas as a child combined with his social observations at the time of his education and the feverish nightmares that would be evoked by these experiences. In my view, these real-life traumas were integral to the establishment of the book’s ambiguous, nightmarish tone, and therefore inextricably linked to the overall myth of Jekyll and Hyde. Having dealt with dreams in my previous work, I was eager for my version to be experienced like one of Stevenson’s nightmares – a
raw, immediate event that didn’t necessarily have a classical narrative structure but would draw heavily from the elements that inspired his book. The film would attempt to restore the ambiguity of Jekyll and Hyde’s common identity and also have a sense of urgency in the way it was made, referencing the feverish manner in which the book’s initial draft was written and received by its contemporary readers. I would attempt to achieve all of this by focusing, not only on characterisation, but method, mise-en-scene and setting.

Firstly, to give *Tera Toma* this sense of urgency, I felt it was important to rely heavily upon improvisation, from both a technical and performance perspective. Having previously experimented with improvisation during the production of *Here Lies Lucy*, I was most inspired by the results that were achieved when the actors, crew and I were not working from a script or shot-list, but from bullet-points and the immediate environment we found ourselves in. The sense of energy that was achieved by this approach created, in my opinion, some of the more suspenseful moments in the film and also contributed to the dream-like nature of the film’s narrative, which would often jump between the subconscious, memory and myth. With *Tera Toma*, I wanted to take this approach a step further by giving the audience the impression that they were experiencing a visceral nightmare. This result, I felt, would be best served by performing the film in real-time – giving the film’s audience a similar sense of feverish immediacy to Stevenson’s expeditious first draft. By having a minimal amount of script to work from, the actors’ performances would hopefully communicate the kind of surreal feeling that one would associate with dreams. Events, actions and dialogue would seem unpredictable and even somewhat out-of-place. The logistical challenge of the film would also present an unspoken threat of failure as well, which could, if the viewer were made aware of the process, contribute to the suspense and terror of the story – in much the same way that Richard Mansfield’s highly technical stage performance put its audience on edge. Furthermore, dreams and the effects of the subconscious would be the impetus by which I would attempt to restore the ambiguity of Jekyll and Hyde’s identity.

In order to have both Jekyll and Hyde appear in a real-time film as well as create a sense of mystery about their connection to one another (in a similar manner to the beginning chapters of the original text), the characters would have to appear in the film together, but remain physically separate. Therefore, I decided to approach my version of the story as a split-screen film, where both characters could occupy their
own frames, but could be viewed simultaneously by an audience. This framework would allow me to experiment with the dichotomies of dream and waking life, of truth and fiction, and of identity within the narrative. When viewed simultaneously, both films could be seen as real events unraveling in real-time or conversely, one film could be the dream depiction of the other, depending on the viewer’s interpretation. Both Jekyll and Hyde could be separate people, one and the same, or characters dreaming of their doppelgangers. This would be reinforced by the use of two different actors, breaking the tradition initiated by Russel Sullivan’s stage version. By presenting the viewer with these two simultaneous stories, which would be in dialogue with each other, my intention was for the film to function cognitively, on a similar level to the way in which one’s brain creates a single perception of the world out of two minds, as Rita Carter describes.

The human brain is the marriage of two minds. Each of its twin hemispheres is a physical mirror image of the other and if one hemisphere is lost early in life, the other may take over and fulfill the functions of both. Normally though, the two are bound together by a band of fibre that conveys a continuous, intimate dialogue between them. Information in one half is almost instantly available to the other and their responses are so closely harmonized that it produces an apparently seamless perception of the world and a single stream of consciousness. Separate these hemispheres, however, and the differences between them become apparent. Each half of a mature brain has its own strengths and weaknesses, its own way of processing information and its own special skills. They might even exist in two distinct realms of consciousness: two individuals, effectively, in one skull. (Rita Carter, 1999, p. 48)

In my view, creating a single film out of two real-time, semi-improvised performances, would communicate some of the major psychological themes present in Stevenson’s novel with an organic ease. The instant comparisons between both films would be presented to the viewer like thought or reverie, which would further connect the audience to the characters’ state of mind. Through improvisation, the actors’ personal mutterings would hopefully serve as a dialogue (however comprehensible) between the two characters over space and time – two individuals, effectively, in one film.

In addition to creating this dream-like experiment, I felt it was also important to have dreams as a narrative device within the film itself. Tera Toma would be about the fear of discovering oneself. Instead of already being aware of the existence of Hyde, Jekyll (much like James Nesbitt’s Dr Jackman) would be under the fearful impression that the horrifically violent activities acted out in his dreams were real.
The discovery that this fear was indeed true would act as the revelatory climax of the film. In fact, this fear and its revelation as truth would echo the emotional journey made by the original readers of Stevenson’s novel as well as that of some of its minor characters – Mr. Utterson for instance, whose haunting dream of Jekyll’s transformation into Hyde becomes true. This psychological framework helped me find a timescale for the film’s plot. On either side of the screen, the viewer would be witness to events that occurred before and after sleep. Jekyll’s story would take place during late evening as Hyde’s would take place at night, once Jekyll was asleep. By following this structure, the viewer would be witness to both action and re-action simultaneously, with the ambiguity between dream and waking life remaining intact until the end. In this way, new possibilities were created for ways in which both stories could synchronize, graphically, thematically and tonally. Depending on the actors’ performances and the plot, the two films would have the potential to rise and fall together with intensity but also conflict at times, battling for the viewer’s attention.

After developing this structure for the film’s dream-like narrative, I began to work on developing a beat-by-beat plot for the actors and crew to work from. I attempted to achieve this by inserting much of the visual imagery that influenced Stevenson’s novel, into the mise-en-scene of Tera Toma. For example, upon discovering the link between Deacon Brody and the young bed-ridden Stevenson, I felt it was necessary to insert a cabinet into my film in order to represent the initial nightmare that inspired the author. The early tales that were told of the dubious cabinet-maker to Stevenson by his nurse were the seed from which the idea of man’s double being grew in the author’s mind. This was further reinforced by Stevenson’s use of the cabinet within the original text as a place where Hyde is literally thought to be hiding. It would, therefore, be appropriate to use a cabinet in my version of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde as a plot device by which the revelation of the protagonist’s double being would emerge. It would hold an object or personal secret that would connect both characters during a crucial moment within the plot. At this point, I drew inspiration not only from Moffat’s BBC modernisation where clues and threats were left by both characters over time and space, but other popular tales of transformation from horror’s history. Despite their difference in origin, I always found a similarity between the Jekyll and Hyde story and Werewolf tales in both literature and film, particularly where the amnesiac protagonists of such stories would find clues leading
to their actions post-transformation. Over recent decades, this recurring narrative device has appeared in popular films and television series such as *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (Joss Whedon, 1997-2003), *Wolf* (Mike Nichols, 1994) and *An American Werewolf in London* (John Landis, 1981), where the bloodied remains of the previous night’s killing would appear on clothing or the event would be reported in newspapers, traumatically forcing the protagonist towards his/her self discovery. In my view, the werewolf’s guilty struggle has always been represented in a similar way to that of Jekyll – sometimes so similar that it too would end in suicide. From this popular motif, I drew the main image of *Tera Toma*; in the left-hand screen, Jekyll would discover a bloodied shirt under his bedroom cabinet (an object that the viewer would notice Hyde frantically searching for at the beginning of the film) and at this same moment, in the right-hand screen, Hyde would be committing a brutal murder (producing the bloody mess that would be found on the shirt). This powerful clash of images would not only provide the viewer with the necessary revelatory climax, revealing that Jekyll and Hyde were one and the same, but it would also introduce an interesting paradox to the film’s plot, where the consequences of actions taken in the future (in Hyde’s screen) would be revealed in the past (in Jekyll’s screen). This would reinforce the ambiguous idea of the film as a recurring nightmare – less of something that is occurring within a real environment, and more of an expressionistic portrayal of Jekyll’s guilt-ridden psyche – ‘the cancer of some concealed disgrace’ (Stevenson, p.17) repeating over and over again.

As for the setting of this recurring nightmare, *Tera Toma* needed to make a strong reference to Stevenson’s Edinburgh-inspired London – citing the environment that gave rise to the initial dual-character of Jekyll and Hyde. It was integral for my film to contain the same attention to architectural detail as its source text. This would provide the film’s audience with the same hints that were given to Stevenson’s original readers when describing Jekyll’s living quarters. Unfortunately, staging the film in one of the two appropriate cities of either Edinburgh or London exceeded my budget for the film. I therefore, at an early stage, decided to shoot the film in Exeter. This provided me with the challenge of finding similar dualities within this city and using them effectively within the film. Similar to many other cities in England, Exeter fell victim to Nazi Germany’s sustained bombing campaign throughout the early 1940s. Much of this bombing affected the immediate areas surrounding the city’s cathedral and central areas and has since had an impact on the architectural layout of
Exeter, which can best be described as an amalgamation of Georgian, Victorian, 60s and 70s architecture. This clear distinction, from street to street, between late 20th century and pre-20th century facades presents the daily population with similar dualities to the Edinburgh that inspired Robert Louis Stevenson in the 1880s. I felt, with *Tera Toma*, that this architectural medley could be quite effective, especially in a film that was being performed in real-time. Jekyll and Hyde’s journey through the streets of Exeter could echo the real-time journeys that Stevenson took through Edinburgh’s old and new town as a young student, thereby drawing attention to the origins of the original text while simultaneously commenting on the film’s dual nature. This setting would also help the film make the temporal journey that the Jekyll and Hyde myth has made itself, from the 19th to the 21st century.

Finding several locations (indoor and outdoor) within walking distance of each other was a logistical challenge for my producer and I. We, therefore, had to prioritize certain locations over others. It became clear from the original text and the discovery of John Hunter’s influence on the setting of Stevenson’s novel that the most prominent location in *Tera Toma* would be Jekyll’s living quarters. Stevenson’s focus on entrances and exits within the original text led me to stage much of *Tera Toma* around the comings and goings of both Jekyll and Hyde. Hints at the identity of these two characters would be revealed throughout the film via the locations that they visited, and as part of the film’s final act, it would become clear that both Jekyll and Hyde inhabited the same residence. Fortunately, we managed to find a suitable location for Jekyll’s living quarters in one of the more Georgian looking areas of Exeter. Colleton Crescent, a road that overlooks the city’s quay, is very similar to the ‘square of ancient, handsome houses’ (Stevenson, p.3) described in Stevenson’s book. Furthermore, as most of these spaces consisted of converted offices as opposed to residencies, the
location that we secured (3 Colleton Crescent) had a dingy basement interior that suited the subject matter of the film. The space was unkempt and damp with little furniture and personality to it. It was exactly the kind of place that the Jekyll of *Tera Toma* would inhabit – hiding his darkest secrets behind a clean Georgian façade while being consistently reminded by his unpleasant and unremarkable surroundings of the darkness within. The property also offered a ‘blistered’ and ‘distained’ rear exit, similar to the one that featured so prominently in the original text. It had an almost primitive, cave-like appearance with a rusty gate securing the back door. This led up a flight of metal stairs to the dark back street of Lucky Lane – exactly the kind of discreet alley that Hyde would frequent. Altogether, this gloomy setting would visually reinforce the nightmarish tone of Jekyll’s descent into madness and transition into Hyde.

**A Post-Genome Story**

After much of the method, mise-en-scene and setting for *Tera Toma* was established, I began thinking about characterisation – in particular, that of Jekyll. What kind of scientist should he be? Should he be one at all? How could the science of the Jekyll and Hyde myth be updated for the post-digital/post-genome age? The *magic potion* approach that pervades the original adaptations with their bubbling beakers and test tubes seemed too clichéd for a postmodern audience to be able to swallow, especially in an age where scientific information has become as easily accessible as that of politics or popular entertainment. I also thought that having a solely psychological approach would be an equal misstep. It seemed far more likely to me, that Jekyll would be someone suffering from a genetic affliction of sorts and that this affliction would have a physical and psychological impact on his character – the appearance of Hyde.

At this point, my research strayed from the original text and its subsequent re-workings and was re-directed towards finding a link between the psychology of the text, the existing framework of my film and biology. This is where Armand Marie Leroi’s book, *Mutants* (2005), served as a backbone for my thoughts surrounding the original myth. From the introductory chapter, there seemed to be a strong link that could be made between the late Victorian idea of *duality inherent in all people* and Leroi’s statement that ‘we are all mutants. But some of us are more mutant than
others.’ (Leroi, p.19) Also appropriate were the comparisons that could be made between now – the post-genome era in which I would be making my adaptation – and then – the age in which Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde was published, where Darwin’s statement that we all descended from ‘beast’ was fresh in the public’s consciousness. As far as the public is concerned, there seemed to be a commonality in the way science was viewed in both time periods. Both the end of the Human Genome Project in the early 21st century and ‘the discoveries in germ theory and immunisation’ at the end of the 19th century gave the impression that ‘doctors could do almost anything’ (Frayling, p.140) or that almost anything could be known about the inner workings of the human body. This all pointed toward that idea that in Tera Toma there could be a genetic inspiration behind the Jekyll/Hyde condition as well as a psychological one. After all, the aesthetic and technical approach of telling the story in a split-screen sequence already drew comparisons to a very specific kind of mutation - conjoined twins.

In the chapter entitled, The Perfect Join, Leroi discusses the fact and fiction surrounding conjoined twins and their history. One of the many issues that he addresses is that of identity. How does one determine the identity of conjoined twins? Are they two individuals within one body or vice versa? According to Aristotle’s early theories on the matter, the question was best answered by observing their origin.

For Aristotle, the two ways of making conjoined twins bear on their individuality; if they are the products of two embryos and are two individuals; if there is only one heart, then they are one. The question of conjoined twin individuality haunts their history… More immediately conjoined twins have, however, always caused confusion. In accounts of Rita and Christina Parodi, the girls often appear as the singular ‘Rita-Christina’ or even ‘the girl with two heads’, rather than two girls with one body – which is what they are. (Leroi, p. 33)

In these early debates surrounding the identity of conjoined twins, I found associative comparisons with questions of identity in both the Jekyll and Hyde myth as well as the film I was attempting to make. Although many of the filmic adaptations of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde presented a binary notion of good and evil to their audiences, the original text proposed both Jekyll and Hyde as equally flawed characters, bound by their need for each other. It was apparent that the novel straddled a grey area between the two characters where Jekyll was not all good and Hyde was not all bad. This was particularly evident in the chapter entitled Doctor Lanyon’s Narrative, where Hyde
voluntarily ingests the medicine in order to restore Jekyll, thereby committing a kind of temporary suicide on his other self’s behalf – a self-serving yet selfless act.

With my own adaptation being presented as a split-screen sequence, similar issues were raised. Would the audience interpret Tera Toma as one or two bodies of work? It was true that the film would be presenting one entire story to the audience out of two components, but the film would also be composed of two different performances that took place at two different times. Unlike Figgis’ Timecode, which was filmed all at once, Tera Toma’s split screens would have different identities within the film proper. Conjoined twins and mutation in general seemed to be an ideal way for me to communicate this complexity to the audience, but in what manner? In order to address this question, I would draw inspiration from more recent and complex developmental discussions surrounding their origin.

Until recently, the origin of conjoined twins has been debated in much the terms that Aristotle used: they are the result either of fusion or fission. Most medical textbooks plump for the latter. Monozygotic (identical) twins, the argument goes, are manifestly the products of one embryo that had accidentally split into two; and if an embryo can split completely, surely it can split partially as well. This argument has the attraction of simplicity. It is also true that conjoined twins are nearly always monozygotic – they originate from a single egg fertilized by a single sperm. Yet there are several hints that monozygotic twins who are born conjoined are the result of quite different events in the first few weeks after conception than are those who are born separate. (Leroi, p.33-34)

As Leroi states, it is now widely accepted that ‘the making of conjoined twins is, first, a matter of making two embryos out of one, and then of gluing them together. Moreover, the way in which two embryos are made out of one is nothing so crude as some sort of mechanical splitting of the embryo.’ (Leroi p.35) It is suggested that a conjoined twin mutation begins during gastrulation – the process by which the embryo reorganizes itself in order to make a foetus out of a minute clump of cells after it has attached itself to the uterine lining of the womb. This largely consists of compiling three layers within the embryo; the ectoderm, which becomes skin, the mesoderm, which becomes muscle and bone and the endoderm, which becomes organs. These layers are often referred to as embryonic discs. As cells migrate across the embryo, they are given instructions as they rub against a small tissue called the organizer, which is comprised of signaling molecules. Until this point, these cells are all equally directionless and insignificant. The organizer, however, tells them where they are going and what they will inevitably become by providing them with proteins.
containing informative signals. One cell may go on to become a part of the eyelid, while the next one becomes part of the stomach, or spine.

Much like the digital landscape that we now live in, ‘the embryo is just a microcosm of the cognitive world that we inhabit, the world of signals that insistently urge us to travel to one destination rather than another, eschew some goals in favour of others, hold some things to be true and others false; in short, that moulds into what we are.’ (Leroi, p. 42) It is said that conjoined twins are the result of an embryo containing two organizers. The conflicting signals produced by these organizers create twice the amount of information – hence the creation of two embryos out of one. How these two embryos then become glued together is a more random process and has to do with the way in which the embryonic discs are positioned within their common yolk sack when they fuse together. This occurrence controls the degree to which the developing twins are parasitic (i.e. dependent on one another) – the manner in which they are mutated. Depending on how this fusion occurs, conjoined twins could be merely attached by a small band of skin at the sides of the torso or they could be fused together more profoundly, sharing organs such as a liver, heart or even a brain. ‘The most extreme form of conjoined twinning is “parapagus diprosopus” in which the fusion is so intimate that the only external evidence of twinning is a partly duplicated spinal column, an extra nose, and sometimes a third eye.’ (Leroi, P.53) It is here where questions of identity come into play. The individuality of a conjoined twin depends largely on the intimacy of the mutation. Indeed, some mutations are so intimate, that one twin (or both) may not even survive development, let alone birth.

As described in Leroi’s book, they are known as teratomas.

These are disordered lumps of tissue that are usually mistaken initially for benign tumors, but that after surgery turn out to be compacted masses of differentiated tissue, hair, teeth, bone and skin…It is now suspected that some teratomas are, in fact, twins that have become fully enclosed within a larger sibling, a condition known trenchantly as ‘foetus in foetu’. (Leroi, p.54)

After exploring this complex series of events that lead to the development of conjoined twins, I began to think about the connections that I could make between these intimate mutations and the Jekyll and Hyde myth. In Stevenson’s original text, Hyde is described as giving ‘an impression of deformity without any nameable malformation.’ (Stevenson, p. 18) To my mind, this was not only an attempt at describing Hyde’s appearance, but also his spiritual similarity to Jekyll. After all, the
above description comes from Mr. Utterson, one of Jekyll’s closest acquaintances. In this context, the statement could almost be read as ‘he reminded me of someone, but I can’t quite put my finger on it’, suggesting that the real horror in Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde is perhaps not the revelation that we all have an evil within, but that our good and evil nature is so similar and bound to each other – an intimate mutation if you will. Parapagus diprosopus, or more specifically, teratomas, seemed the perfect metaphor for the parasitic relationship between Jekyll and Hyde, and indeed, this is where the title for my film, Tera Toma, came from. Leroi’s discussions of cells, fission and fusion influenced the approach that I would take with my adaptation. The method, mise-en-scene, characterisation and setting would be inspired, not only by Stevenson’s original text and its subsequent redirections, which I have previously discussed, but it would also be inspired by mutation.

As previously mentioned, I initially thought of having Jekyll as a character suffering from some kind of genetic affliction. I imagined updating Jekyll to the post-genome age by making him a genetic researcher who suffers from an intimate mutation similar to parapagus diprosopus, and in some Sci-Fi-esque manner this mutation would take over his body, creating Hyde. As time progressed, however, I strayed from this idea because of its obviousness and opted for a more metaphysical approach. The mutation would not be a plot device within the narrative of the film and nor would it be a character trait. It would be something referred to in the manner by which the film was made and the way the narrative unfolded. Furthermore, like the literary naturalism popular during Stevenson’s time, mutations and conjoined twins would be built into the environment of the film, affecting the psychology and destiny of the protagonist. In Tera Toma, Jekyll’s affliction would be mental but informed by biological metamorphosis. I would attempt to communicate this to the film’s audience with the opening sequence – setting the scene by splitting the embryo. Since the rest of the film would be
performed in real-time, the title sequence provided me with an opportunity to experiment further with the layering of imagery – *vertical montage*. Similar to *Here Lies Lucy*, I would combine several layers of video in order to create a mental image-space, guiding (or lulling) the audience into the dream-like environment of the film. This would also symbolize the layering of embryonic discs and randomized migration of cells within the developing embryo. The sequence would begin as one fluid widescreen image consisting of shifting defocused light and after time, a plethora of conjoined and mutated images would begin to shift into focus. As these images became clearer, a line would appear down the middle of the widescreen frame, giving the impression that two screens were being created out of one. As this border became more defined, the two different settings would be revealed to the viewer. In the right-hand screen Hyde would be waking up having been strapped to his bedpost, and in the left-hand screen Jekyll would be asleep amongst a collection of conjoined twins and other preserved mutations. This collection would be representative of Jekyll’s profession.

During the 18th and 19th centuries, it was common for scientists around the world to amass large anatomical collections for their research and in many cases, such as John Hunter’s, this was the sign of a progressive, obsessive scientist – one of the main inspirations behind Stevenson’s Dr Jekyll. Among these obsessive collections, the most radical would be of the teratological kind. These expansive assortments of conjoined fetuses, fused bone and incomplete limbs revealed the most about not only the limitations and horrors of the human body, but of scientific knowledge as well. In 1890, very close to the time of *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* and Jack the Ripper, one such collection by Dutch anatomist, Willem Vrolik was bought by the citizens of Amsterdam and to this day it has remained one of the only teratological exhibits open to the general public in addition to doctors and scientists. In my mind, this was the kind of imagery that needed to surround a modern day Jekyll. As well as harking back to the surgeons and grave-robbing imagery of the Georgian and early-Victorian era that influenced Stevenson, Vrolik’s exhibit
represented the curiosity of Stevenson’s time – a period one century after the public’s rejection of John Hunter’s attempts at exhibiting his own exhibition, when the public was finally ready to witness and consume science’s grotesque findings in the same way that they devoured Stevenson’s novel. Vrolik’s collection also provided me with a through-line – a way of tying together all the meta-narrative detail that surrounds the conception, publication and redirection Stevenson’s original text. I could also bring the Jekyll and Hyde myth up-to-date by referring to our contemporary post-genome age where scientific limitations are replaced by an abundance of information, something that ironically produces a similar kind of horror.

Inspired by Vrolik’s collection, I approached Steve Newton, an artist who I had previously worked with who specialized in sculpture. I was still unsure of what profession Jekyll would have in Tera Toma, but the approach I would eventually take soon became apparent through Steve’s work and the discussions we had concerning the film’s opening sequence. His personal style, which largely involved using dolls and plaster casts, was very similar to the kind of imagery I was looking for to accompany the beginning of the film. A lot of his already existing work had a gruesome violent quality to it, but there was also a similar serenity to Vrolik’s Amsterdam collection. Although during our initial meeting, we discussed the possibility of making Jekyll’s teratological collection as life-like as possible, I was more drawn to the idea of turning the collection into an art exhibition, reflecting Steve’s own artistic process. This approach would give him more freedom to experiment and would also change the nature of Jekyll’s character. Instead of being a scientist working with actual specimens, Jekyll would be an artist inspired by science. His artwork would be a physical manifestation of his inner fears of being different and paranoia of having an abnormality. His teratogological collection would be an art
exhibition that he would be obsessively attempting to perfect. In my view, this would serve as an interesting take on the *mad scientist* cliché that pervaded previous adaptations.

In many ways, the image of an artist asleep amongst a deformed collection of his own creations was a much stronger, obsessive and psychologically disturbing image. It was an original way of separating from Stevenson’s original text and the traditions that had been established by its many adaptations. It would still, however, reference the bold, artistic vision of scientists like John Hunter, who approached their work in an artistically detailed manner, influencing the original Jekyll character. With the Vrolik collection and Leroi’s book as reference points, Steve made a collection of twenty-one mutant dolls that would be *preserved* in tanks for the film’s opening exhibition sequence. Some of the pieces would be based upon actual deformities discussed in Leroi’s book such as cyclopia, conjoined twinning and syrenomelia (*mermaid syndrome*), while others would have a more fantastical edge to them.

Due to the nature of the materials that Steve sourced (all from the same model of anatomically accurate vinyl doll), the finished pieces, despite their differences, shared a kind of unified tranquility, which not only referenced the dualities of light and dark, good and evil in the Jekyll and Hyde myth, but also reinforced the idea of repetition in *Tera Toma*. One was under the impression, upon seeing these sculptures, that Jekyll the artist was caught in a loop, producing variation upon variation of the same image in an effort to make the perfect sculpture. In my adaptation, Jekyll would have the obsession of a Hunter-esque surgeon, but he would be tormented by the inadequacies and limitations presented in his work. The film would follow this insecure character trait passed down from Stevenson’s original Dr Jekyll. He would be a character who has ‘lost confidence’ in himself. (Stevenson, p.37) The frustration, anxiety and paranoia caused by this lack of confidence would be revealed as the reason behind his dreams, manifesting themselves as Hyde – a taunting, sneering, angry mutation.

Fig 25. *Jekyll: Artist as surgeon or surgeon as artist?*
Adapting the Tradition of Experimentation

From the start, it was important for Tera Toma to allude to the tradition of experimentation that Stevenson’s original text inspired in its adaptations to stage and film. Trial and error has, throughout the years, been an integral part of the meta-narrative surrounding the Jekyll and Hyde story from Richard Mansfield’s mysterious stage transformation to Mamoulian and Struss’s cinematic conjuring. In many ways, the technical attempts at adapting Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde have been as bold and progressive as the story’s split-protagonist, the subjective nature of whom these experiments have hinged upon. In my attempt to continue the myth that Stevenson established, my own film would endeavor to respond to some of the breakthroughs in cinematic language that were provoked by Rouben Mamoulian’s 1932 adaptation. Tera Toma would also draw inspiration from techniques used by filmmakers in the contemporary, post-digital landscape where the aesthetic and narrative experiments of the past have developed over time as a response to technological advancements.

One such experiment would be the use of split-screen as a narrative, structural and graphic device. As I previously stated, the reason behind shooting Tera Toma in split-screen was largely as a response to common knowledge that Jekyll and Hyde were the same person. By making the film in this manner, I had the potential to restore some of the mystery and shock value that Stevenson’s story had lost over years of adaptation and redirection. I also, however, had the opportunity to experiment with new ways in which the meaning of the original text could be conveyed through cinematic technique. By having Jekyll and Hyde played by two separate actors, Tera Toma would, in a similar way to the naïve, multiple perspectives of the original novel; create the impression that the two characters were different people. The challenge, therefore, lay in the film’s ability to convey the subtle similarities between the two seemingly different protagonists while simultaneously avoiding any revelation of their true nature. As previously discussed, these subtleties would be controlled by the plot, mise-en-scene and setting of the film. They would also, however, be affected by experimental approach of telling the story with two frames, instead of one.

The use of split-screen in cinema has existed since the beginning of the 20th century; however, academic discussions surrounding this technique have been relatively sparse until recently. Today, the split-screen device, used at different
moments throughout cinema’s history, is seen as the provider of a historical timeline that charts our human responses to technological change. This consists generally of three periods when the technique has been popular amongst filmmakers in mainstream cinema – the late 1950s, the late 60s/early 70s, and our contemporary post-digital age. In each of these periods, this device can be seen as a shift in cinematic language in an attempt to either represent, understand or compete with other media via its allegorical, self-reflexive properties.

Beginning in the silent era and culminating in the late 1950s, the split-screen in popular narrative film had been predominantly used to depict conversations between characters over telephone. This became particularly popular in the late 1950s with romantic comedies such as *Pillow Talk* (Michael Gordon, 1959). The approach, allowing the audience to witness two distinct spaces simultaneously, was in one way, a mere substitute for crosscutting. Where it differed, however, was in its ability to share the intimate aural space of two characters while simultaneously referring to their physical separation – graphically fulfilling the function of the telephone. This also presented an allegory for ‘the spectatorial situation in the cinema which is similarly characterised by an oscillation between presence and absence, between proximity and distance’ (Malte Hagener, 2008). At this time, the use of split-screen in popular film didn’t extend much further than this, although as Hagener states, ‘the strategy of negotiating one medium (telephone) via another (cinema) is telling, as it provides the audience with a model for making sense of technological shifts.’ (Hagener, 2008)

Along with the arrival of various colour and widescreen processes in the 1960s, cinema’s sudden and extensive display of split-screen in films such as *Grand Prix* (John Frankenheimer, 1966) and *The Thomas Crown Affair* (Norman Jewison, 1968) could be seen as an attempt at reaching back to cinema’s original focal point of attraction as opposed to narrative in order to compete with the new technology of Television – limited at the time to a predominantly low resolution, black and white 4:3 frame. Indeed, the use of split-screen in the late 60s was chiefly inspired by attractions. Eye-opening experiments displayed at New York’s World Fair in 1964 and Montreal’s EXPO 67 prompted filmmakers to begin employing multiple screen techniques in their narrative films. This new approach, influenced by the experimental avant-garde, went a step further than ‘echoing the basic properties of the telephone
Filmmakers began to experiment with split-screen on a narrative and structural level. This was particularly evident in a number of psychological thrillers that were produced in the late 60s and early 70s, specifically, *The Boston Strangler* (Richard Fleischer, 1968) and *Sisters* (Brian De Palma, 1973). Both films employed split-screen as a way of intensifying the disturbing nature of their narratives. Based on the true story of self-confessed serial killer Albert DeSalvo, *The Boston Strangler* used split-screen as a way of building suspense within the narrative. Sequences unfolding in real-time, would place DeSalvo (played by Tony Curtis) and his victims in separate frames during the moments preceding a murder. As the two merged in space and time, the film would return to a single frame as the murder took place. This approach increased the level of tension in the film, not only by providing the audience with the preemptive knowledge of the victim’s fate, but by exploiting the self-reflexive function of split-screen – the fluctuation between proximity and distance, echoing the audience’s tense relationship to the image – thus making the film’s audience as vulnerable as DeSalvo’s victims.

In a similar manner, De Palma, who employed this technique a number of times during his career, used split-screen throughout his body of work in order to conjure up moments of suspense. In his films ‘the split-screen is embedded within a (neo-)baroque universe of elaborate camera movements, intricate framings, radical montage and narrative constructions characterised by repetitions, mirror images and picture puzzles - the cinema and its means of expression form a universe closed unto itself.’ (Hagener, 2008) In *Sisters* specifically, split-screen is used in an alternative manner to *The Boston Strangler* by depicting the minutes following a murder. The event is seen from two perspectives, the victim and a witness (Grace Collier). In a similar manner to the phone conversations of *Pillow Talk*, split-screen is used to depict a communication (albeit silent) between characters in their respective frames as the victim uses his fading strength to write ‘help’ in his own blood on a window,
forcing Collier, who sees it from her apartment, to investigate. This instance shared between the two characters narrows the distance between the two frames, eventually engulfing Collier in the complex mystery surrounding the film’s subject, Danielle, who has no memory of the murder she has apparently committed. It is almost as if the splitting of the screen was designed in order to reach out from it’s single-frame narrative and entice another character into the film.

In both films, the split-screen’s self-reflexive properties are also used to shed light on the subjective nature of their murderous characters. Both Danielle and DeSalvo are depicted as having either split or multiple personalities. They commit their murders whilst in a psychotic state. In the case of Sisters, this psychosis is caused by the psychological trauma of Danielle’s physical split from her deceased conjoined sister, Dominique, a personality that takes over her consciousness in order to kill. In both of these cases, split-screen’s allegory of cinema’s oscillation between presence and absence is used as a device to further understand and represent the plight of the films’ protagonists. The splitting of the mind (and additionally in the case of Sisters, the body) is represented in the splitting of the frame. By making the audience aware of their own relationship to the screen, this technique exposes the cognitive similarities between the state of the audience and the state of the films’ protagonists.

In the post-digital age, these cognitive properties of the split-screen have expanded as technology has become evermore complex and integrated in our daily lives. Over the past 15 years the split-screen has been used extensively in film, television and video. This increase is largely due to the accessibility of technology, which has not only ‘simplified the complicated process of constructing split screens in optical printing’ (Hagener, 2008), but has put it in the hands of an ever-growing number of people. The digital revolution has democratized interactivity, which is evident in our rampant use of information technologies with their overlapping windows and applications. Split-screen is no longer simply an allegory for our relationship to the film image, but for our relationship to all images as the digital has archived and dispersed the various qualities of cinema across a plethora of interdisciplinary visual technologies. It is no surprise then that the mental processes of our daily lives, which now largely involve the simultaneous interaction with and interpretation of multiple screens on computers, mobile phones, video games and hand-held devices, have made their way into the language of film. In response to our use of media, it is now common for the screens to not only split, but also to move
about the frame in constant flux, like thought – ‘temporal and spatial mutations that act as allegorical configurations of changing media practices.’ (Hagener, 2008) As Nicholas Rombes states, ‘A show like 24 is fractured into small, floating screens because it is to be watched on small, floating screens.’ (Rombes, p.102)

Due perhaps to its shift from a material, linear process to a binary non-linear one, the split-screen is becoming as commonly used to represent our subconscious as the dissolve was used in classical cinema to represent the transition between space and time. Today, memory, trauma and the imagination are often translated into floating, interchanging screens in films as disparate as The Tracey Fragments (Bruce McDonald, 2007) and Tyson (James Toback, 2008), which use the technique extensively in an attempt to comprehend the psychology of their ever complex subjects.

In the The Tracey Fragments, Tracey (played by Ellen Page) tries to come to terms with accidentally losing her little brother as she travels a city bus in search of him. In an attempt to portray the fragmented mind of a teenage girl, director Bruce McDonald uses layer upon layer of moving screens depicting the repetition of traumatic, guilt-ridden moments as they run through Tracey’s head. Some screens show her brother playing in the snow (the last moment she saw him), others show her attempting to talk to her mother on the phone (using split-screen techniques of the past in order to stress an emotional distance) while even more screens show her fleeing from an attempted rape. This technique rises and falls with intensity depending on the drama in the film. The more thoughts Tracey has, the more screens there are. In Tyson, James Toback uses these techniques in a non-fiction setting. As boxing legend Mike Tyson discusses the many controversies that have surrounded his career, the film splits into multiple screens. Similar to The Tracey Fragments, the quantity and movement of these screens depend largely on the nature of what is being said. When Tyson discusses the
crippling paranoia he felt after being released from prison, the film splits into several images of his face, some talking and some thinking.

Through the narrative, structural and graphic use of split-screen, *Tera Toma* would, in a similar way to *The Boston Strangler, Sisters, The Tracey Fragments* and *Tyson*, attempt to represent the subjective nature of its characters – Jekyll and Hyde. Performed in real-time and presented (for the most part) as two immobile screens, the film would graphically and formally share similarities with the early telephone conversations depicted in 50s Hollywood and the tense, self-reflexive psychological thrillers of the late 60s and early 70s. The fluctuation between proximity and distance highlighted by these early uses of the technique would be one of the main focuses in my attempt to build suspense and convey the subtle similarities between the two seemingly different characters. This would be achieved in two ways, framing and sound. As *Tera Toma*’s narrative unfolded, it would seem as if Jekyll and Hyde were aware of the each other despite their separation in space and time. Indeed, as previously discussed, the film would approach the relationship between the two screens as if they were conjoined – two individuals in one body. Therefore, particular attention was given to the border that the two screens shared and this affected framing to a large extent. Throughout the narrative, the ambiguous relationship between the characters would depend on their proximity. When the similarities between the two characters were obvious, the actors would be framed near the middle where the two screens were joined. When the similarities were subtle, they would be framed on opposite sides, stressing their separation in time and space.

![Fig 28.](image)

The attention given to framing and to the fluctuating proximity and distance of the characters helped reinforce some of the major themes that were not only inherent in Stevenson’s original novel, but in the biological motivation behind the film. During moments when Jekyll and Hyde were framed in the middle, they would give the impression of physical connection, like conjoined twins. Apart, they would bring to
mind the condition known as *situs inversus*, which presents a similar paradox in conjoined twins to that of the split-screen. Literally translated as *position inverted*, the term refers to the positioning of the internal organs within some conjoined twins where the hearts (if there are two) are positioned on opposite sides of the two joined bodies – echoing the debates surrounding identity within the mutation. (Leroi, p. 55)

Altogether, the attention to framing in the film would accompany the actors’ performances, rising and falling with tension depending on their position within the frame.

The use of sound, particularly vocal, would work in the same way. In *Tera Toma*, both Jekyll and Hyde would talk to themselves as they traveled from one location to another. Intentionally, the actors would improvise these mutterings in an attempt to communicate their internal thoughts to the audience – shedding light on their descent into madness. Due to the fact that each character’s narrative would be performed separately, it would be impossible for the two actors to hold a coherent, improvised conversation across the border of the frame. Instead, this approach would create a series of fragmented exchanges between the two screens, which would at times, accidentally synchronize to create a single dialogue out of two monologues. This steady stream of audio, similar to the abundance of signals produced in the developing embryo of conjoined twins, would stress the intimate cognitive relationship between Jekyll and Hyde. When their monologues were not synchronized, this would re-establish the characters’ relationship to one another in space and time. Hyde would be the voice in the back of Jekyll’s head and vice versa.

In this way, the use of sound in *Tera Toma* would reference (in a similar way to the framing of the film) the allegorical properties of the split-screen in order to place the audience in a subjective position to the film’s dual characters, a position that would be manipulated during the final moments of the film.

It is here that, Mamoulian and Struss’s influence would make its way into the split-screen world of *Tera Toma*. Although the physical transformation between Jekyll and Hyde would not be taking place within the film (due to their already simultaneous existence within the narrative), it would be referred to through the use of floating screens. During the climax of the film, when Jekyll and Hyde’s relationship to one another is revealed, the two separate narratives would change places, causing the film’s plot to reboot – repeating the nightmare over again. This would be depicted via the actual crossing of the screens, referencing the various lap
dissolve processes used in early adaptations to depict the Jekyll/Hyde transformation. Furthermore, this approach would have an effect similar to the use of panchromatic film in Mamoulian’s 1932 version in which coloured filters were slowly moved across each other in order to reveal the horror within.

Similar to *The Tracey Fragments* and *Tyson*, the movement of these split-screens would draw attention to the complex psychology of Jekyll and Hyde revealing their transformation through the manipulation of the images’ structure rather than content, with the screens representing the minds of the characters. Jekyll’s attempt to conceal and suppress Hyde’s existence would place him in the position that Hyde finds himself in at the beginning of the film – strapped to the bedpost. Hyde’s existence, having been revealed by Jekyll, would cause him to break apart into a dreamlike, swirl of images – similar to the embryonic, painterly textures of the film’s opening sequence.

Drawing from the opening sequence of Mamoulian’s 1932 adaptation, *Tera Toma* would pay particular attention to subjective camera work. Although the film would not contain any traditional point of view shots, Jekyll and Hyde’s characters would be presented in a similarly subjective manner. During much of the film, the audience would be positioned in the third-person. This would be enforced during the moments where Jekyll and Hyde would be muttering to themselves while traveling from one location to another – the moments when their internal thoughts would be most exposed. In recent years, this positioning of the camera has become common in long-take films such as *Elephant* (Gus Van Sant, 2003) in order to create an empathetic relationship between the viewer and the film’s subject. In Van Sant’s film,
the camera follows a collection of interconnected high school characters around empty hallways and busy cafeterias during the moments preceding a Columbine-style shooting. Following all these disparate characters (the victims, witnesses and the killers) from behind, the film places the stereotypes that usually represent the social hierarchy of an American high school (the jock, the nerd, the loner etc.) on the same human level. In this context, the camera is used to comment on the possible causes of high school violence in the United States by putting the audience in a similar position to that of the point of view of the young people. The distance that is created, however, by not placing the audience in their full point of view results in a comparable feeling of suspense to that of the split-screen. Like the moments preceding the killings in *The Boston Strangler*, *Elephant* dwells for very long periods of time on the events leading up to the massacre, often repeating them from a different perspective. This stresses the viewer’s lack of control over the events of the narrative.

![Grand Theft Auto IV](Rock Star Games, 2008)  ![Tomb Raider: Underworld](Eidos Interactive, 2008)

![Tera Toma](Joshua Gaunt, 2010)  ![Elephant](Gus Van Sant, 2003)

The recent use of this subjective camera position in cinema is perhaps, in a similar fashion to split-screen, due to the way in which this technique has been used in other media practices. During the past 15 years, the *third-person shooter* has become an increasingly popular form of video game in which the player has control over an avatar that is placed in a similar position to that of the characters in *Elephant*. 
In games such as *Grand Theft Auto* and *Tomb Raider*, designers have gone to great lengths to give the impression that players are in control of their avatars’ narratives – giving video game characters like Laura Croft back-story and motivation. However, ‘A number of oppositions exist between the forms of narration and game. Stories first of all evolve out of protagonists who act according to their specific characters. But a protagonist who is solely dependent on the player's will cannot have a soul, even if the game design tries to display one (Birk Weiberg, 2002, p. 3). With this in mind, viewers of films like *Elephant* and *Tera Toma*, are placed in a position which is similar to that of the relationship between player and avatar. They are given the impression of having control when there is none. Arguably, this technological allegory, provided by the use of third-person point of view, contributes to the suspense of the films that it is used in.

In an attempt to follow the ‘virile, realistic, almost brutal treatment’ (Turner, 1999) of the image in Mamoulian’s 1932 adaptation, *Tera Toma* would not only emphasize the use of hand held photography, but experiment in order to find ways of exposing the fragility of the image. As previously discussed, Mamoulian and Struss frequently used double exposures and long dissolves in order to immerse the viewer in Jekyll’s paranoid, guilty state of mind. This approach would often give the impression that the residue of certain events would be hanging on in the protagonist’s mind long after they were finished. This effect had also been used as far back as the 1895 press photo for Richard Mansfield’s stage production in order to depict the dual nature of the characters. Due to the real-time nature of the film, using this specific post-production technique in *Tera Toma* would not be possible. I therefore endeavored to find a way of ‘layering’ the image in camera. Due to the technical limitations of the camera with which I chose to shoot *Tera Toma* (Panasonic Lumix DMC-GH1) I was left with two possibilities for shooting in low light. One option was to use a portable lamp rigged to the top of the camera. This would enable me to expose the image properly, but would result in an artificial TV...
news look for the film. The other option, which I followed, was to experiment with the slow shutter speed capabilities of the camera. This approach, which is essentially the video equivalent to the long exposure in still photography, has been used in a variety of digital productions over the past ten years including Inland Empire (David Lynch, 2007) and Hotel (Mike Figgis, 2001). In these films the technique, which slowly exposes the video image while it is captured – creating a distorted, trail-like effect – is often used to depict the physical distortion or mental anguish of a character.

In my mind, this technique would provide me with the ideal way of visually portraying dream like nature of the narrative. It would also, much in the same way as the actors’ performances and the use of framing and sound within the split-screen framework, rise and fall with intensity throughout the narrative, referring to the strained relationship between Jekyll and Hyde.

This technique, coined by Figgis (2007, p.76) as ‘The Bacon Effect’ (referring to the distorted images made famous by the painter, Francis Bacon), would also refer to the scientific inspiration behind the film. Depending on the slowness of the shutter speed, the image and characters within it give the impression of mutation as if it were in the process of splitting apart, much like the internal structure of a conjoined twin’s embryo.

Fig 32.

'The Bacon Effect' - slow shutter speed
CONCLUSION: THE POST-DIGITAL WORKSHOP

Manifesto Culture

Ian Andrews suggests that post-digital art is an ironic reaction to the over-saturation of media – a crisis point in the light of sweeping technological change. ‘This reaction often takes the form of a (naive) return to the purity of modernism. A flight away from the complex problematics of a period of crisis and toward the cosy certainties of an earlier age.’ (Ian Andrews, 2002, p.2) In post-digital filmmaking, this retreat can already be seen in recent efforts that filmmakers have made to rekindle the aesthetics of the past by either mimicking the look of 35mm film or using an intentionally deteriorated look in their work in an attempt to counter the clean immaterial of the digital. It is also apparent, however, in the way that digital filmmakers have approached their productions using methodology as a starting point. Today, filmmakers have become increasingly concerned with revealing their own processes. The often-experimental nature by which films are assembled has come into focus in a similar manner to the way in which the modernist artistic movements of the past (Surrealism, Futurism etc) have revealed their means. As Andrews states, ‘One of the hallmarks of modernist art movements is the manifesto’ (Andrews, 2002, p.2), and since the dawn of the digital era in film there have been manifestos loaded with collective and personal intent, challenging filmmakers to bring something more to their creative processes as a response to the flexibility of this new technology.

The Dogme 95 manifesto, the most internationally recognized of these declarations derived, for the most part, from director Lars von Trier’s personal feelings surrounding his own filmmaking. Having spent many years making highly technical films such as Europa (1991), he began to strip away the aesthetics that had dominated his previous work in order to find more freedom in his methods. One early result of such experimentation was his Danish TV series, The Kingdom (1994-1996), which was the first of his works to implement a purposefully degraded aesthetic, using hand-held cameras, available light, and even crossing the 180-degree line during dialogue scenes. The commercial success of this programme proved that a loose approach to film production could work (as long as the story was compelling). Also, ‘it gave von Trier, who in his earlier work had not been particularly comfortable directing actors, a new freshness and a more relaxed attitude’ (Peter Schepelern, 2006,
p.64), resulting in more energetic performances. Despite his reputation for having a manipulative, almost sadistic control over his films and indeed actors, the new methodologies and technologies that von Trier embraced in the mid-1990s introduced a more collaborative element to his work. This process gave von Trier a taste for ‘deliberately abstaining from control’ (Schepelern, 2006, p.64), a methodological motif that still dominates his films today and which led to the establishment of Dogme 95’s vow of chastity which he co-wrote with filmmaker Thomas Vinterberg. The vow of chastity was presented as a list of ten commandments for filmmakers to follow which would strip their films of bourgeois illusion in an attempt to find an authenticity in their work. ‘The method, which combines personal therapy with artistic discipline, is a kind of aesthetic masochism…an artistic flagellation intended to cleanse the artist of all commercial vices, leaving him purer and better’ (Schepelern, 2006, p.64). Despite these personal motivations, the Dogme manifesto also called for more collective filmmaking as a response to the failure of individualism within film, as described in the following excerpt:

Slogans of individualism and freedom created works for a while, but no changes. The wave was up for grabs, like the directors themselves. The wave was never stronger than the men behind it. The anti-bourgeois cinema itself became bourgeois, because the foundations upon which its theories were based was the bourgeois perception of art. The auteur concept was bourgeois romanticism from the very start and thereby…false! …DOGME 95 counters the individual film by the principle of presenting an indisputable set of rules known as THE VOW OF CHASTITY. (quoted in Hjort & Machenzie, 2006, pp. 199)

This approach, at least in the films that were produced under the Dogme 95 umbrella, created a shift in production methods from a feudal top-down mode (typical of Hollywood films) to a more collaborative workshop process where the manifesto provided an artistic freedom for not only the director, but actors and crew as well. Because the vow of chastity involved all aspects of film production, the following (and subtle breaking) of these rules called for more collective responsibility on the part of directors, camera operators, actors and editors. This, coupled with the technological and economic flexibility of digital equipment, meant that the process of trial and error could be prolonged. As von Trier describes when recounting the making of his Dogme film, The Idiots (1998), ‘the great advantage…was that we could keep going until we were happy.’ (Stig Bjorkman, 2003, p. 211) This freedom to experiment is similar to other instances in Cinema’s past where lightweight,
affordable equipment has challenged the status quo by producing more independently minded, progressive films through its human usage. In fact, von Trier cites the Nouvelle Vague and the films of John Cassavetes as inspiration behind his Dogme 95 work, revealing a post-digital yearning for the past in his technological progression forward. In response to this he has said, ‘I don’t really think The Idiots matches my perception of that period. The film is more about my longing for that period, which I obviously wasn’t able to experience and take part in. But it was an era that promoted freedom and liberation on every level.’ (Bjorkman, 2003, p. 216)

Due perhaps to Dogme 95’s international popularity amongst filmmakers and world cinema enthusiasts, the tendency to impose rules upon the filmmaking process has become commonplace in recent years. Immediately following the relative commercial success of the first Dogme films, Thomas Vinterberg’s Festen (1998), von Trier’s The Idiots and Harmony Korine’s Julien Donkey-Boy (1999), other filmmaking communities attempted to follow in Dogme 95’s footsteps by putting forth their own manifestos and declarations; Minnesota Declaration: Truth and Fact in Documentary Cinema, Vogma Manifesto, Webdogme Manifesto, (Hjort & Mackenzie, 2006, pp. 200-202) are but a few examples. In fact, during the past decade, a kind of manifesto culture has spawned from technological change in which the filmmaker has been encouraged to use discipline in his/her work as a countermeasure to the flexibility, accessibility and speed of the equipment now dominating film production. Due to the lack of restrictions inherent in said technologies – their ability to record data for prolonged periods of time coupled with the data’s ability to be copied endlessly without deterioration – it seems that filmmakers have begun to insert rules into their creative processes in order to replace the natural restrictions inherent in working with celluloid.

One example of this culture comes in the form of the film challenge. In 2001, American independent filmmakers Mark Ruppert and Liz Langston started the 48 Hour Film Project (www.48hourfilm.com), a call to arms for all budding filmmakers to try their hand at storytelling with speed. Taking its lead from 24 Hour Plays, the project was invented initially as a personal challenge for Ruppert, Langston and their filmmaker friends in Washington D.C., to see if making a coherent film would be possible within such a timescale. After the success of their initial project, Ruppert and Langston decided to share their challenge with the world. As a result, the 48 hour film challenge has become a popular event linked to festivals, educational institutions and
filmmaking communities around the world, where teams of filmmakers are asked to follow a *vow of chastity* similar to von Trier and Vinterberg’s, where an appointed character, prop, line of dialogue and genre serve as limitations to work from in conjunction with the timed challenge. In recent years, as technology has become even more immediate with the acquisition of tape-less workflow in consumer, prosumer and professional HD cameras, the *48 hour film challenge* has become just one of many fixtures in rule-based, immediate filmmaking. Production technologies have evolved and become more integrated with online media. As a result, hybrid video hosting/social networking websites such as Vimeo and Youtube have dispersed *manifesto culture* across the virtual world. Groups, channels, commercial organisations and staff members set challenges for their online communities.

In exchange for money, prizes, equipment and/or recognition, independent filmmakers are now regularly encouraged to participate in technical and artistic rule-based competitions. In this respect, *manifesto culture* has not only become a part of film methodology, but a way by which independent filmmakers can exhibit their creative abilities and *break into* the industry, bypassing the traditional hierarchal system of the film business, which encourages aspiring filmmakers to work their way up from the bottom.

**Watching Back**

One can ascertain from the *Dogme 95* movement, the *48 Hour Film Project* and the present abundance of online video communities, that the democratisation of moving image technology has, over the past 15 years, encouraged a generation of grassroots, self-motivated filmmaking. With this in mind, said technology’s lack of elitism poses a more human challenge to a system that is seen by some as a relic of the mechanical age.

The film business has always been a war between individual creativity on the part of film-makers, and studios who see their job as being to curtail creativity and control it themselves. They always talk about a team when in fact it’s a dictatorship. Very benevolent, but despotic. The more control producers have over score, camera movement, casting, story and so on, the more secure they are in a very insecure business. (Figgis, 2007, p.33)

As Mike Figgis states, ‘with the generic availability of digital video, I do think it’s important for us to create our own systems’ (Figgis, 2007, P.34). In fact, there have been many recent occasions where established filmmakers have turned to the personal
challenges of a manifesto or methodology as a therapeutic retreat from the autocratic system to which they have become accustomed. Recent work by British director Shane Meadows is one example. His feature *Le Donk & Scor-Zay-Zee* (2009) was made as a personal reaction to the existing realities of film production in the UK, where, he states ‘the people who create the idea, make the film, break their back, lose their hair, are the people who come last’ (Demetrios Matheou, 2009). Self-funded and improvised from scratch over the course of 5 days, Meadows’ film seems like an ideal example of the kind of work that digital technology encourages – serendipitous, collaborative and immediate. As Meadows describes, ‘there was no script at all, just my faith in my relationship with Paddy [Considine], and that behind the camera, in that environment, I would find the story. Everything was about believing in the happy accident’ (Matheou, 2009). With *Le Donk & Scor-Zay-Zee*, Meadows proves that narrative filmmaking in the post-digital age is largely concerned with adaptation. As Mike Figgis suggests, ‘Instead of expecting the world to be created for the film, it’s now become much more a case of how you can fit into a world that already exists’ (2007, p.75).

Meadows’ film is not an isolated event. In fact, other filmmakers have gone further in their collaborative, democratic approach by involving their casts and crews more in the storytelling process. The immediacy of digital technology has led to more self-reflexive methods within film production where the act of watching back with a view to fine tune has become commonplace. The lightweight, inexpensive nature of digital desktop editing equipment, for instance, has led to the integration of post-production into principle photography in an attempt to communicate the context of a project. Mike Figgis’ film, *Timecode* (2000) was perhaps one of the first examples of this. Shot in real-time, each day over the course of two weeks, the film was reviewed by its cast and crew after the completion of each 90 minute, four-screen take in an effort to adjust performances and technical logistics. Figgis describes the process in the following passage:

‘We were able to watch the entire film that afternoon … So it was the first time in history, I would say with confidence, that the cast and crew have watched the finish product of the first day that they shot it which means that for the first time ever, actors are aware of how they relate within the film, what their context is, and what the overall emotional tone of the film is.’ (Rombes, 2009, p. 139)
This approach was a major benefit for the actors involved who, under the Hollywood system of filmmaking, would have left their responsibility over the film’s narrative with the producer, director and editor. Now, with methods like those presented in Figgis’ work, where the act of reviewing has taken precedence over the storytelling process, it seems that members of the film community that were once spectators of their craft are now active participants, interacting with the narratives that they are a part of. As Holly Willis states, ‘rather than passively receiving images…we can now more readily engage with the production of images’ (2005, p.9). The ability to review a film as it is in production has not only made it more feasible for amateur filmmakers to perfect their craft, but has also enabled filmmakers to get better results from non-professionals – further democratizing the filmmaking process. One example of this is the film **Bubble** (2005), which was directed by Steven Soderbergh over the course of 18 days with a cast of non-actors. Based in the small factory town of Belpre, Ohio, Soderbergh attempted to create an authentic sense of place for his thriller by using real settings and casting local people as the film’s main characters. Furthermore, Soderbergh’s auditioning process for the film was based not on these individuals’ acting abilities, but their personal experiences. This involved approach seeped into the production of the film, where the cast and crew were given the freedom to respond to their scenes and devise as the film progressed; ‘we could all sit down…we would watch the movie a lot, because I would cut every night. We would just transfer the HD right into my computer and cut…. On the last day of shooting we watched the whole film’ (Rombes, 2009, p.137). In this manner, the production of **Bubble** became a collaborative workshop process where the film was created from the bottom-up by a team of both experienced and inexperienced filmmakers, building a fictional story out of a real environment. These experimental methods show that as the delay inherent in working with celluloid narrows, less formal approaches to film production begin to

![Cast and crew review their takes on the set of Hotel (Mike Figgis, 2001)](Fig 33.)
emerge. As Rombes suggests, ‘the casual informality that marks our time marks our cinema’ (2009, p.22).

After ten years of avant-garde experimentation by filmmakers such as Figgis, von Trier and Soderbergh, methodologically-motivated filmmaking has begun to cross over into the domain of more commercial, mainstream productions. In recent years, for instance, much has been discussed regarding performance capture technology and the creative freedom that it provides actors, by giving them a platform that is unconstrained by lighting, costumes, makeup or camera set-ups. Recent technological advances have enabled the self-reflexive, trial and error techniques pioneered by the likes of Mike Figgis to become a fundamental part of this heavily computer-generated process. In the past, with films such as Beowulf (Robert Zemeckis, 2007) and The Lord of the Rings (Peter Jackson, 2001-2003), performance capture has been perceived largely as a technical post-production process where the data created by actors’ performances is painstakingly assembled over the course of several months following principle photography. During the production of James Cameron’s Avatar (2009), however, new hardware and software was developed in order to merge these computer-heavy CGI processes with the actors on set during production. A virtual camera (SimulCam) was developed so that the cast and crew were provided with the ability to see the actors in performance capture clothing (mocap suits), projected by the virtual camera as the imaginary computer generated characters they were playing. Furthermore, ‘the entire CG environment and the CG details outside the set, such as action visible through windows. All of this could be seen in real time through the SimulCam’s viewfinder and on live monitors on the set, allowing the human actors to interact directly with the CG characters and enabling Cameron to frame up exactly what he wanted’ (Holben, 2010). Much in the same manner of Figgis’ Timecode ten years earlier, the priority behind Cameron’s production method was to provide as much context as possible for his cast and crew by demystifying highly technical post-production techniques.

As Avatar’s cinematographer, Mauro Fiore, explains further:

“With the SimulCam, you don’t have to imagine what will be composited later — you’re actually seeing all of the pre-recorded CG background animation,” says Derry. “So if you want to start the shot by following a ship landing in the background and then settle on your actor in the frame, you can do that in real time, as if it’s all happening in front of you. On every take, the CG elements are
going to replay exactly as they’ve been designed, and you can shoot however you want within that world.” (Holben, 2010)

With this technology, the traditional working methods of film production have been compressed. Pre-visualisation (pre-production) and compositing (post-production) have become a part of principle photography, with casts and crews being able to watch back over their performances in near real-time. While the initial discussions that once surrounded digital filmmaking were concerned primarily with immediacy and the freedoms it provides, it seems that in the post-digital age, films are becoming more concerned with how immediately self-reflexive they can be in a methodological and narrative sense. After all, with the ecology, romance and adventure put aside, *Avatar* is fundamentally a performance capture film about performance capture. Much like *Dogme 95* our human interactions with digital technology have lead to process becoming a predominant element of narrative – a trait that unites art-house, independent and mainstream fare.

**The Evolution of my Practice**

During the course of my PhD, my practice has become increasingly concerned with not only post-digital aesthetics, but methodology as well. After the production of *Here Lies Lucy: A Vampire Yarn*, I was left with a personal desire to make work that
was more collaborative and immediate. The post-production process of _Here Lies Lucy_ was a very solitary affair, separate from the more collaborative experience of its main production period. I felt that the aesthetic experiments (combining real materials with digital effects) were a success, but overall, the film was lacking the energy and perhaps _authenticity_ I was striving for in my work. However, in the areas of the film where I was less specific and controlling with my approach on set, I found the results to be more rewarding. This came from the predominantly unscripted sections of the film where I had forced myself to collaborate more with the cast and crew as we went along, following the suggestions made in Mike Figgis’ book _Digital Film-Making_ (2007).

During the intervening year between the production of _Here Lies Lucy_ (2008) and _Tera Toma_ (2009) a fundamental shift occurred in my working methods. This change was largely instigated by a series of collaborative filmmaking projects that I became involved with outside of my academic studies. As a result of managing my own freelance filmmaking business, which I started at the beginning of 2007, my thoughts around directing for film began to change. As a community workshop artist and videographer, I started to operate the camera more, and in an improvised manner. The confidence that I gained from working in this participatory setting led to the production of _Noise Reduction_ (2008) a film that I co-directed and shot with a team of fellow filmmakers for the _Sci Fi London 48 Hour Film Challenge_. Much like Ruppert and Langston with their initial project in 2001, I was surprised by both the quantity and quality of that we managed to achieve in such little time. It was a liberating experience. Using a barebones crew and working with actors who were prepared to improvise and devise from scratch produced exciting results. This made me wonder whether the same results would have been achieved over the course of a longer, more considered production. The _48 Hour Film Challenge_ inevitably had a transformative effect on my practice prompting me to look at ways in which I could turn my filmmaking into a more collaborative, immediate and self-reflexive experience.

Inspired by the immediacy and energy of this new approach, I began to seek ways in which I could put these ideas into practice. The _Third Wave_, a local manifesto put forth by fellow PhD by Practice candidate John Sealey, provided an ideal outlet for these ideas and formulations. The manifesto provided framework and guidelines just as the _48 Hour Film Challenge_ had done, but on a smaller and even more immediate
scale. Its ethos, which lay in re-assessing the role of the filmmaker, was also very similar in nature to the *Dogme 95* manifesto.

**THIRD WAVE MANIFESTO:**

The age of filmmaking has reached a crossroads in its history. These days, making film has become, to all intents and purposes, a practice motivated by a career trajectory that seeks to place one person (the director) at the top of the creative tree, using a feudal model laid down by the parameters of Hollywood.

Filmmakers today use the idea of the short film more as a ‘calling card’ to mainstream success rather than just an idea motivated by the need to express it within the art of film. It is within this cinematic environment that the *Third Wave* is born.

In order to invigorate our film practice with new ideas, we have created the following 3 steps to cinematic heaven that will characterize the spirit of all our work:

1. All films must be created in the spirit of spontaneity – no scripts, no pre-production.
2. All films must be no longer than 2 minutes.
3. All films must be produced within 90 minutes – from the start of shooting to the end of editing.

*Third Wave 07/08*

It was here that the *Third Wave Collective* was born. The rules provided by this manifesto were flexible, to the extent that any piece of work could be made. Narrative short films, vlogs, camera tests and animations were all eligible to be classed as *Third Wave* films, as long as the work adhered to the manifesto’s three simple rules. *Third Wave*’s primary purpose was to eliminate the caution with which we approach our filmmaking, to prompt our reaction to immediacy. Much like automatic writing, the individual was encouraged to explore what could be found within the process of filmmaking itself, without being bound to script, rehearsal and other traditional methods that had the potential to strip a film of its energy. With the task of creating a piece in its entirety within 90 minutes, from conception to completion, the local filmmakers who participated were forced to think beyond long-term ideas that they may have had, and thus *Third Wave* gave birth to visions and ideas that otherwise may not have been given the platform to be expressed.
During a span of two years (2008-2010) an average of 20 people made over 160 films for the Third Wave Collective, many of which have been selected for film festivals and screenings, both in the real and virtual world online. Participating in this collective reinvigorated Third Wave filmmakers’ practice by providing a platform to experiment without the fear of derision or failure. For many, the 90-minute production process has become akin to a training program. The self-appointed test of inventive improvisation provided a valuable opportunity to practice with new equipment, explore embryonic narrative ideas, new or abstract visual techniques, and to freely express opinions through film. As a result, much like the post-digital films of today, Third Wave films have, over the course of two years, gone from being primarily concerned with immediacy, to being immediately self-reflexive. This can be seen in selected film titles throughout 2009 which highlighted filmmakers’ tendencies to formulate their Third Waves around the movement itself: You Never Make a Third Wave With Me (Joshua Gaunt & Pippa Stephenson, 2009), Third Wave on Xtranormal (Benjamin Borley, 2009) and Frantically Trying to Think of Something to Record a Timelapse of While Secretly Kidding Myself into Making A Third Wave (Harry Willmott, 2009) are but a few examples.

Since 2008, I have used the Third Wave manifesto and its ethos as a means of experimenting with and commenting on the theories behind my practice. As I was still preoccupied with the aesthetic ideas explored in Here Lies Lucy, my first excursions into Third Wave filmmaking were primarily concerned with digital texture and vertical montage (or Super-Structures). However, soon after I came up with the idea for my next PhD project, Tera Toma, the manifesto became a means by which I could devise and experiment with the methodological ideas that were beginning to formulate into its production. In this way, along with script writing, casting and budgeting, the act of filmmaking became an important part of the pre-production process. In the months preceding Tera Toma’s
main production period, I made a series of smaller split-screen films in order to address the theoretical and logistical elements that would come into play when making the final piece. The first of these test pieces, pAra NoiA, was a silent short that explored the aesthetics and meanings that could be derived from different methods of framing in a split-screen sequence. This first film enabled actor James McLaughlin (Hyde) and I to investigate the self-reflexive process that would later go into the making of Tera Toma by exploring the relationships the two performances shared graphically over time and space. Using a piece of music as inspiration for timing and mood, we filmed the left-hand screen several times before we were content with the performance. We then proceeded to watch the chosen take back in order devise syncing points for the second performance (the right-hand screen). This gave me an early understanding of the logistics that would have to go into the production of Tera Toma while putting James into the mindset of having to evaluate and respond to his own performances.

With the success of pAra NoiA, we proceeded to make two more films in preparation for Tera Toma. These two pieces veered away from the Third Wave manifesto, but shared a common ethos in that they were improvised from scratch over the course of a relatively short period of time (from 6 to 8 hours). Sleep Paralysis explored the thematic ideas that I was developing concerning dreams and nightmares. It followed the concept that one screen could represent the subconscious of the other. To achieve this dichotomy stylistically, it juxtaposed shallow depth of field, with deep depth of field, which visually contributed to the development of Tera Toma’s dream-like opening sequence. These tests also served as confidence building exercises for not only James and I, but for the cast and crew who watched them back. The ability to distribute these films on the Internet in the months preceding our main production period enabled us to partake in a discourse surrounding the logistics and context of
the film. Little Circles, our third film was made with this purpose in mind. As a final test, it tackled many of the logistical challenges that remained, such as working with multiple actors in dialogue scenes and two-system sound recording. With this final test occurring two months before production started, it shed light on the technical issues that we needed to address before embarking on a film with a considerably longer running time – a film that we would need to fit into a pre-existing environment.

The Tera Toma Project and Beyond

Inspired by Figgis’s Timecode and Hotel, as well as the method that Soderbergh employed on Bubble, I knew early on that I wanted to make a film that was collaborative in nature where the act of reviewing would be a fundamental part of the production process. In order to successfully produce a 45-minute film in real-time on a low budget, a more streamlined system would have to be devised to replace the slower, more traditional production model exercised during the filming of Here Lies Lucy. Despite the absence of a manifesto, my excursions into Third Wave filmmaking had provided me with the ideas and discipline to be able to lay down parameters for Tera Toma’s production. With just enough budget for one week’s shoot, we would have to rely on a more self-reflexive system in order to make the best film we could in the allotted time. Much like the tests that we filmed prior to the main production, we would shoot one screen first (Jekyll’s story), then the second (Hyde’s story). This process would then repeat on a nightly basis over the course of 5 days. Each morning, the previous night’s take would be reviewed by the cast and crew, with an aim to improve scenes and address technical and logistical issues. These discussions would be put into practice during that evening’s filming. Adhering to this structure, the cast and crew would adapt to the
logistical circumstances of the production over the course of the week with the hope of perfecting the film by the end of the 5-day production period. Overall, the process was very similar to the films that were made in preparation for the shoot. Where it differed, however, was in the amount of permitted takes. Unlike the 3-4 minute films that we made over the course of a day, we did not have the opportunity to re-take a 45-minute performance until we were satisfied. Therefore, natural boundaries were created by the film’s production method. The very fact that we were limited to 5 takes throughout the week meant that any mistakes made would be both a blessing and a curse. If an error occurred, we would have no choice but to continue with the film until it’s completion. Therefore, over the course of the 5 days mistakes made us acutely aware of consequence. They became a necessary prerequisite to the success of the film. This approach was a new experience for many of the filmmakers that collaborated on Tera Toma, who were more used to working in an industry where they had a minimal amount of responsibility over the final result of their work.

In the end, this process was rewarding in a number of ways. Throughout the week, Tera Toma came to be defined by how it was being made. This is primarily due to the fact that the methodology spoke to the film’s subject matter, as Stevenson’s two characters came to be intertwined in an infinite duet, each half informing and altering the other’s actions. For example, on the first day of production, Jekyll’s performance would be the foundation on which Hyde’s performance would be built. Subsequently, Jekyll’s performance on the second evening of the production would be informed by the film’s first viewing. In this way, Jekyll’s performance would be not only a response to his previous take, but to Hyde’s interpretation of his previous take as well. As this cycle continued throughout the week, both of Jekyll and Hyde’s performances would evolve into
one perfectly synchronised performance, echoing the dual, yet singular nature of
the Jekyll/Hyde myth. Such an endeavor was risky, as the two performances could
potentially have never reached this synchronisation point. In fact, after two failed
attempts Jekyll and Hyde’s narratives only became synchronised on the third night
of production, leaving us a mere 2 days to iron out any further technical issues and
achieve the best take. Upon completion, *Tera Toma’s* fifth and final take,
according to myself and the cast and crew, provided the best version of the film.
With this result, *Tera Toma’s* production method proved successful.

As I continue with my practice, the aesthetics and methodologies that I have
explored during the course of my PhD are becoming more relevant everyday. My own
journey as an academic filmmaker has echoed that of the post-digital landscape. In the
beginning, my work was primarily concerned with the absence of material or haptic
texture present in digital film and the contrasting meanings that this presented in film
production. By exploring the ways in which this lack of substance has prompted
filmmakers to re-assess the material processes of the past while shaping their work in
an increasingly digitised environment, I was able to devise an aesthetic for adapting
the texts of the past in a post-digital manner. In my own adaptation of Bram Stoker’s
*Dracula*, this was achieved by focusing on the human errors that could be presented
in the digital image via the interplay between hands-on material techniques (stop
frame animation and lino print) and the non-linear processes exclusive to digital
editing (compositing and motion graphics). Moving away from this preoccupation
with aesthetics and focusing on the immediacy and availability of digital technology
caused me to re-assess the methodology behind my practice. In a similar manner to
the arthouse and mainstream filmmakers of today, I have recognised that this new
technological landscape has provided us with more collaborative possibilities and
human processes for film production. By imposing their own limitations in a
technological landscape that is becoming progressively unlimited, filmmakers are
finding new ways to express themselves in film, outside of the traditional structure of
the *Industry*. More self-reflexive processes and narratives are emerging as a result of
the sheer quantity and immediacy of the technology now dominating our daily lives.
By applying these methodological trends to my own work, I have been able to execute
more ambitious and energetic work by finding new ways of staging my film
productions. This has helped me to re-address the *deceased* and over-layered texts of
the past such as Robert Louis Stevenson’s *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, and breath new life
into the myths of the mechanical age. As I move forward in my practice, this interplay between post-digital methodology and aesthetics will play an important part in the devising and execution of my work, both professionally and academically.
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Appendix

1.

During the pre-production process of my second PhD film, *Tera Toma*, I was inspired by the way in which Arin Crumley and Susan Buice’s *Four Eyed Monsters* (2005) extended beyond its narrative structure through the use of social networking and video blogs. Their approach to distributing their film seemed an ideal model for not only generating an audience for the film, but also encouraging a lively debate surrounding the production. In an attempt to achieve a similar result with my project, I decided to introduce a similar model during the production of *Tera Toma*. I did this by adopting a relaxed camera policy. This created a situation on set whereby anyone involved in the production was given a platform to be creative with his/her own video cameras and mobile phones. Initially, this was an attempt at creating behind the scenes content that people could access during the days preceding the film’s premiere. Due to my loose direction on set, however, members of the cast and crew ended up creating a variety of content that included not only documentary footage of the filmmaking process but also trailers, vlogs and independent narrative films that were loosely connected to the themes and plot of *Tera Toma*.

![Tera Toma Day Three by Harry Willmott](image1)

![Making Blood by Harry Willmott](image2)

All of the videos that were produced by the cast and crew were uploaded to *Vimeo* as the film was in production (www.vimeo.com/channels/teratomaproject). Due to the frequency and immediacy of this process, potential audience members were able to tap into the excited and busy collaborative atmosphere on set and, to a certain extent, experience the process of making such an experimental film themselves. At the beginning of principle photography, the content that was created was, for the most part, behind the scenes documentary coverage of the different jobs that needed to be done before shooting took place. Depending on what these tasks...
were, this would reveal certain elements of the film’s narrative and give the audience a sense of what to expect from the film. For instance, the making of Jekyll’s gallery space and the production of fake blood were both emphasized in short documentaries made by production assistant, Harry Willmott (see Fig. 1). As the film went further into production, more was revealed about the characters and the plot in this way. Depending on one’s point of view, this could have both a positive and negative effect on the audience’s reception of the film. For those following the behind the scene videos, plot details were given away or hinted at in episodes such as Day 4: Life After Hyde (see Fig.2), where actor James McLaughlin was revealed to be playing the part of Hyde (despite this fact being kept as a relative secret until the film’s end credits). His actions in the film were also given away. Fake blood seen on James’ hands and the discussion featured in the video revealed that a major character was beaten to death at the film’s climax. In many instances, this information would ruin the viewing of a film. By watching these videos, however, Tera Toma became largely about the process or its own creation and, for some, these plot revelations aided the experience of watching the film. For instance, the condensation shown on the camera lens in Life After Hyde as James calms down after a take revealed to the audience the level of energy that went into his performance. This knowledge prepared viewers for an intense viewing experience. In fact, one response that I received from an audience member after the film’s premiere in Exeter suggested that it wasn’t so much what happened in the film that was disturbing, but the knowledge that it was going to happen. This process revealed how Tera Toma worked as a self-reflexive viewing experience.

Due to the minimal nature of Tera Toma’s shooting schedule, members of the cast and crew also had time to film and edit their own independent creative content during principle photography. A surprising result of the film’s relaxed camera policy was the sheer amount of content that was created during the week. A total of 36 videos were
produced during the production, many of which followed on from the themes presented in *Tera Toma*. Some of the best examples came from camera assistant, Benjamin Borley, who produced a series of black and white films on his camera phone. *Tera Toma Long Portrait* (see Fig.3), for instance, was influenced by the production’s split-screen format. It portrayed each member of the cast and crew as their own Jekyll and Hyde, set to the sound track of a crying baby (influenced by sculptures in the film). This piece served as an interesting teaser for the main production, but also further developed ideas presented in *Tera Toma* and Stevenson’s original text – mainly that we are all Jekyll and Hyde/good and evil simultaneously.

*Fig. 3*

*Tera Toma Long Portrait* by Benjamin Borley

Another piece entitled, *Last Night* (see Fig.4) was a personal response to the otherworldliness of the production. Set to a poetic voice over, the film provided the
viewer with a behind the scenes look at the gallery set of the film, but through the use of mostly close ups, abstracted the space and made it feel as if it were the setting of a dream. This, again, experimented with themes inherent in the main production and gave the film’s potential audience a hint at the tone of the film and extended certain surreal elements of the plot. Approaching the production of Tera Toma in this manner was liberating in the sense that every member of the cast and crew, irrespective of their technical role, was given the ability to contribute to an ongoing meta-narrative. As a result, Tera Toma’s process, like the post-digital films that preceded it, was very much an extension of its narrative.