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# Adapting Lyricism: Clive Holden's *Trains of Winnipeg* and the Lyric in Film

David Foster, University of Alberta, Canada

The adaptation of poetry to film is rare, and discussions or analyses of such adaptations are even rarer. Clive Holden's film cycle *Trains of Winnipeg: 14 Film Poems* (2004) offers not only fourteen examples of films that adapt poetry, but also an opportunity to critically engage with films that foreground the lyricism of the poems they adapt. These film poems are part of Holden's broader multimedia endeavour, a project which includes a book of poems, a CD of spoken word poetry, and a website that links all the elements of the project together. Holden's films adapt his own writing, the poems collected in the book *trains of winnipeg: poems*. The adaptation of poetry in the films of *Trains of Winnipeg* departs from other approaches to bringing poetry to the screen in that they do not attempt to literalize the lines of the poems, nor do they impose narratives onto non-narrative lyric poetry. [1] Instead, *Trains of Winnipeg* focuses its attention on adapting the formal qualities of lyricism into a filmic context. Rather than simply making films of his poems, Holden's approach to adaptation creates "film poems," or better still, lyric films.

In his analysis of the *Trains of Winnipeg* film cycle in his excellent article "Poetry and Avant-Garde Film: Three Recent Contributions" Scott MacDonald emphasizes the way in which Holden's films "republish" his poetry [2] (MacDonald, 2007: 38). For MacDonald, *Trains of Winnipeg* and the other film poems he analyzes "do not adapt the poems (revising them for use in a new context)" (MacDonald, 2007: 14-15). Rather, MacDonald suggests, these film poems "deliver the original words in their original senses, as precisely as possible, to new audiences through a different medium. They are, in other words, closer to new *editions* than to adaptations" (MacDonald, 2007: 15). While MacDonald clarifies in a footnote that he recognizes that the recontextualizing involved in the movement from print to screen does "create somewhat different readings of the poems" he insists that "there seems a firm commitment ... to the original poetic text, which are used not as material but as finished works, each with its own integrity" (MacDonald, 2007: 15). MacDonald's reading of *Trains of Winnipeg* emphasizes elements that foreground this fidelity to the 'original' source poems. To begin with, MacDonald focuses on three film poems -- *18,000 dead in gordon head* (2001), *the jew and the irishman* (2004), and *the bus north to thompson with les at the wheel* (2004) -- that are the most unassailably narrative of the films in the cycle. This narrative selection helps support MacDonald's claim that *Trains of Winnipeg* presents the film poems in "an order that forms a more or less coherent autobiographical narrative" (MacDonald, 2007: 30). MacDonald furthers his reading of a narrative trajectory in *Trains of Winnipeg* by suggesting that the "personal quality of this narrative is considerably enhanced by the fact that, in those instances where a poem is read on the soundtrack, Holden is the reader" and that "the poems and films

transform him into a character" (MacDonald, 2007: 30-31). Yet MacDonald's emphasis on narrative and an autobiographical unity in the *Trains of Winnipeg* cycle overlooks the strong lyrical qualities that run through the fourteen film poems. Even in the more overtly narrative films of the cycle that MacDonald discusses, the movement from page to screen requires that Holden adapt the lyrical elements of his poetry -- especially the negotiation of subjectivities and the reflexivities of language -- into lyrical elements apposite to the film medium.

This paper will consider how seven of the fourteen "film poems" in particular, though by no means exclusively, adapt the lyricism of Holden's poems by reshaping their performative, narrative, and transtextual aspects: *love in the white city* (2004); *active pass* (2004); *neighbours walk softly* (2002); *nanaimo station* (2004); *18,000 dead in gordon head* (2001) *Hitler! (revisited)* (2002); and *trains of winnipeg* (2004). [3] To better understand what this lyricism might entail in Holden's films requires examining the film-cycle's relationship to lyricism. This relationship to lyricism can be considered from four perspectives: first by analyzing Holden's films in relation to theories of the literary lyric; second, through the theories of film lyricism put forward by P. Adams Sitney; third, in relation to the *Trains of Winnipeg* project as a whole, by discussing the role of lyricism in film adaptation in light of Robert Stam's reworking of Gerard Genette's theories of hypertextuality; and finally, exploring the limits of lyricism in film towards what Douglas Barbour has called the "lyric/anti-lyric." These theoretical approaches, from the literary lyric to the lyrical film, and to the transtextual and anti-lyric limits beyond lyricism, provide a critical framework within which to discuss what is already a shifting term. The point of such varied approaches is not to fix the meaning of the lyric or lyricism, but to offer perspectives from which to see the lyric in film more clearly, since film adaptations of lyric poetry inevitably transform the traditionally literary definition of lyric. The literary lyric has been understood traditionally as any short non-narrative poem documenting the expression of thought or emotion of a single speaker, or, as Northrop Frye describes it, "the utterance overheard" (Frye, 1957: 249-250). The film poems of *Trains of Winnipeg* challenge such conventional definitions of the lyric, not by denying its validity, but by expanding its horizons and testing its limits beyond the literary lyric and towards lyricism as a filmic mode.

Lyricism in Sound and Image: *love in the white city*

The first film of the cycle, *love in the white city* recasts its eponymous lyric source by emphasizing and enhancing sound and image patterns. These sound and image patterns provide the grounds for an initial connection to the literary lyric. Drawing from Northrop Frye's concepts of "melos" and "opsis," Jonathan Culler points to sound and visual patterns as elements that undermine the view of the lyric as speech overheard (Culler, 1985: 38). Instead of considering sound patterns, including rhythm, rhyme, and alliteration, as evidence of the attitude or character of a speaker, Culler suggests that such lyrical "melos" can reflexively stress the role of linguistic play over dramatic unity in understanding lyric poetry and recalling the lyric's roots in music and song (Culler, 1985: 40). Similarly, Frye's "opsis," Culler says, acknowledges the importance of visual patterns in shaping one's understanding of lyric poetry, through forms and stanza patterns that connect the lyric to other non-narrative forms of poetry, such as concrete poetry (Culler, 1985: 40). In *love in the white city*, sound and image patterns highlight the shifting tensions between the lyrical voice, the "I" of the poem spoken in voice-over, and the filming camera "eye" of the four-way, split-screen image-track. The various points of 'view' in the film, both auditory and visual, disrupt any sense of a single

speaker or consciousness.

Throughout the film, the four-way image-track, showing four similar images of feet walking or of a shadow-cast-figure moving over changing terrain, prevents identification of the filming "eye" seeing its own shadow with the speaking "I" reciting the poem. For instance, while the voice-over proclaims, "love in the white city. is blasphemous/ i will hunt you down/ and kill your new wife," the four split screens present different images that could be variously linked to this threatening statement. In the bottom-left corner, the image of feet walking rapidly suggests "hunting down." The top-right frame shows a figure in shadow moving in dramatic slow motion. In the bottom-right frame, with the line "and kill your new wife" the shadowy figure stops, standing still. And in the top-left frame, the shadow moves at a pace similar to the bottom-left frame. Each image, recalling conventional images of menace from the film noir or the horror film genres, is at once connected to and separate from the speaking "I" and the other images. This separation of points of view and the multiplicity of "voices" it produces also reflects the content of the spoken poem itself; just as the poem invokes multiple perspectives of what constitutes the experience of "love" in Winnipeg, so too the image-tracks present multiple perspectives of traveling through the "white city."

The sound and visual patterns of *love in the white city* also suggest the performative aspects of the film, creating lyrical connection through the "musical" performance of the image and sound tracks. The refrain-like repetition of the line "Love in the white city is..." and the repetitious ambient music and sounds are akin to the rhythmic patterns in the four frames of the screen. Holden's images play off of and with the words of his vocal performance. Thus, the film's performance of its source requires that the viewer negotiate between the various points of view, to choose whether to pay closer attention to the words or the images. This experience becomes most apparent when there are noticeable changes in one of the images. Such breaks in the image patterns produce further tensions between word and image. For example, the shot of cat that appears in one frame conflicts with the spoken lines "love in the white city. is too brutal/ the horses mount cows/ the chickens eat pig." By breaking the film's established patterns, the cat's presence draws the viewer's attention to the top left frame but also encourages the viewer to attempt to connect the cat to the words being spoken, despite its obvious contradiction with the words of the poem. It is only at the end of the film that there appears to be any unity to the lyric expressions of image and sound, as all four frames display the same image -- the lone figure's still shadow on the pavement -- seemingly reconciling with the lyrical voice that says "you've cost me everything -- / i have nothing but you." This dynamic, from dissonance to harmony, further emphasizes the sense of *love in the white city* as performative, at once an iteration and a citation in the Derridean sense that adapts its source poem through musical and lyrical construction.

### Lyric "I" and Lyric "Eye": *active pass*

The disruption of the lyric "I" in *love in the white city* is also apparent in Holden's film *active pass*. Whereas *love in the white city* accomplishes this disruption through shifting tensions between sound and image, *active pass* realizes it by rewriting its lyric source and reflexively drawing attention to the "I" of the lyric. Made up of footage shot on a ferry passing through an ocean pass, *active pass* combines this filmed document with Holden's lyric poetry. In adapting the poem "active pass (radical poet on his fortieth birthday)," however, Holden renegotiates the position of the lyric "I" to better match the documented images. Doing so requires Holden to eliminate or alter stanzas and

lines that are especially personal or draw attention to the "I" of the poem as a character. Lines in the poem such as "i'm halfway there. after all the foreplay," become "we're halfway there" in the film version, literalizing the metaphor that links an ocean ferry to an aging body (Holden, 2002: 31). But this shift from "I" to "we" is not simply a movement from the singular to the plural; the "we" repeated on the soundtrack of the film does not signal a multiplicity of voices in the film, a lyricism akin to that of T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*. Rather this multiplicity suggests an attempt to negotiate the gap between the lyric "I" of the poem and the visual lyricism of the film in the absence of the literary "I."

For all its editing of the source poem, the film version of *active pass* does not (or perhaps cannot) hold off the lyric "I" completely. This lyric subject returns in the line "i squirm in my hard-ass macdonald's chair," noticeably accompanied by the appearance of a filming "eye" on screen: the filmmaker himself, with his Vertovian camera eye. The final shots of the film take this identification of the filming "eye" as lyric subject further. As the voice-over reading of the poem ends, the film continues with images of the filmmaker filming himself in the reflection of a glass life-preserver case. In a series of cuts, the images move through closer and closer shots of the filmmaker, until the final image of a close up of the camera lens obscuring most of the filmmaker's face. The image is held for a moment, and the filmmaker's right eye, the one not looking through the camera, opens. In these series of images, the spoken lyrical "I" is literally displaced by the filming camera "I" and the filmmaker's combined lyric "I/eye," extending beyond the words of the poem. In this elision of "I" and "eye" *active pass* proposes another form of lyricism, one more germane to its filmic context, and one that emphasizes the visual over the verbal.

This other lyricism draws on the long history of images of subjectivity in the cinema. First and foremost the "I/eye" of the camera is an homage to the image of the camera eye that William Wees has called "the leitmotif of the eye" (Wees, 1992: 13). Wees traces this leitmotif through the history of avant-garde cinema, from Dziga Vertov's *Man with a Movie Camera* (1929) through Man Ray's *Emak Bakia* (1926), Kenneth Anger's *Inauguration of the Pleasure Dome* (1954), and Stan Brakhage's *Song I* (1964) (Wees, 1992: 13-14). The subjective camera eye in *active pass* presents its vision as sharing in the subjective experience documented in avant-garde cinema, especially the films of Stan Brakhage. Brakhage makes the connection between the lyrical "I" and the camera eye in his equally lyrical *Metaphors on Vision*:

> And here, somewhere, we have an eye (I'll speak for myself) capable of any imagining (the only reality). And there (right there) we have the camera eye (the limitation, the original liar); yet lyre sings to the mind so immediately ... dependent upon attunation, what it's turned to (ultimately death) or turned from (birth) or the way to get out of it (transformation). (Brakhage, 2004: 201)

As in Brakhage's manifesto, the "I/eye" of *active pass* also suggests a lyrical subject particular to the film-poem mode. It is a subject that does not need to proclaim itself verbally, to say "I," but one that aims to acknowledge its subjectivity visually and its visual subjectivity. It is not only the "I/eye" that is seen on screen, but it is the "I/eye" from which the film poem's images originates.

### Lyrical Film and Quotidian Lyrics: *neighbours walk softly* and *nanaimo station*

These aspects of the lyricism in *active pass* recall P. Adams Sitney's theories of film lyricism from his book *Visionary Film*. In his discussion of avant-garde and experimental film, Sitney proposes two

categories of lyric film. The first, the lyrical film, which Sitney sees as exemplified by the work of Stan Brakhage,

> [P]ostulates the filmmaker behind the camera as the first-person protagonist of the film. The images of the film are what he [sic] sees, filmed in such a way that we never forget his [sic] presence and we know how he [sic] is reacting to his vision. (Sitney, 2002:160)

For Sitney, the images of the lyrical film portray the visions of the filmmaker, in an "intense experience of seeing" (Sitney, 2002: 160). Moreover, as a presentation of subjective experience, the lyrical filmmaker eschews realist representation, as the lyrical film "affirms the actual flatness and whiteness of the screen, rejecting for the most part its traditional use as a window into illusion" (Sitney, 2002:160).

Sitney's second lyric category is the quotidian lyric, films related to film diaries, city symphonies and home movies that record "sensibility in the midst of, or fresh from, experience" (Sitney, 2002: 424). Although quotidian lyric films draw from the everyday experiences captured in film diaries or home movies, they manipulate time, light, and texture to convey the sense of the imposition of the filmmaker's vision (Sitney, 2002: 425). Departing from the lyrical film, Sitney suggests that the quotidian lyric favours "a paratactic linearity that suppresses or reduces thematic organization" in a manner that "emphasizes presence to evoke absence" through profusion (Sitney, 2002: 426).

Both Sitney's theories of the lyrical film and the quotidian lyric film offer ways to consider the lyricism of Holden's films. *neighbours walk softly*, for instance, evinces many of the characteristics Sitney ascribes to the lyrical film. The high contrast, blurred images of *neighbours walk softly*, along with its use of superimposition and rhythmic montage, are reminiscent of the lyrical vision of Brakhage's films, especially his *Dog Star Man* (1961-1964) cycle, which Sitney says "elaborates in mythic, almost systematic terms, the worldview of the lyrical films" (Sitney, 2002: 190). Sitney's reading of *Dog Star Man* emphasizes the lyrical experience of the film's protagonist and its mythopoetic extension of the lyrical film. According to Sitney, in this mythopoetic lyrical film the first-person point of view expands, passing through cosmic and microscopic, internal and external dimensions that refocus the experience of seeing through the lens of various levels of consciousness (Sitney, 2002: 190-203). While *neighbours walk softly* does not aspire to the epic vision of Brakhage's *Dog Star Man*, it too extends the subjective vision of the lyrical film.

By pairing lyrical film images with the voice-over reading of what Holden calls on his website the "anti-war protest" poetry of "Neighbours Walk Softly," the film plays off the tension between personal and political (Holden, 2006: n.p.). The images of the film, though only occasionally identifiable behind textured superimposition and blurred focus, generally depict brief flashes of urban and suburban scenes: people in parks, residential streets, fences, and stop signs. Holden's lines about class division and poverty -- "where would the lines be drawn in the event of war?/ Well the war against the weak wages in the air around us" -- seems at odds with the subjective point of the view of the film's lyrical images. Yet the distortion of the film's image track can be seen as reflecting the simmering political outrage of the voice on the sound track that asks, "Where did you draw the line/ When we slaughtered the 200,000 desert faced young men in the gulf/ And cleared the homeless with horses and water cannons?" Just as the questioning voice of the lyrical subject can no longer accept the *status quo* of a corrupted world, its "eye" can only see this world through

corrupted, distorted vision. The pairing of the personal and the political in *neighbours walk softly* is at times jarring. The lyric voice's shifts from you to we and its lone "I said" tend to dissociate the sound track from the singular subject point of view of the image track. Yet the lyric experience of the film at least attempts to combine visionary images and activist poetry into a politicized vision, though at times with limited success (perhaps attributable to deficiencies in Holden's poetry more so than his filmmaking).

Similarly, *nanaimo station*, exhibits aspects of Sitney's quotidian lyric. Made up of footage from old family 8mm home movies, *nanaimo station* could be called Holden's ode to his birthplace. *nanaimo station* casts this amateur footage in a lyrical light by manipulating the images through repetitious and rhythmic editing, superimposition, and alterations to the colour of the original film. The central images of the film, a series of shots of a child (Holden himself), first crawling, then standing, and then walking, are edited in short loops of a few seconds, producing flickering images of repeated action. These loops are then superimposed over scenes of a harbour and a street, and edited alongside other found footage. The repetition of the editing, set in time to the music, and the use of colour filters that tint the images, together give the impression of the filmmaker's lyrical interaction with this personal footage.

Like Sitney's quotidian lyric, *nanaimo station* portrays the experience of memory, both voluntary and involuntary, as the filmmaker reflects on the images of the home movies. As in the quotidian lyric, *nanaimo station* transforms personal documents through the lens of subjective experience. With the exception of the linearity of the progression of repeated images of the child, the home movie footage seems to pour out, like the process of involuntary memories. The other dominant images in the film -- of, a harbour, a woman at a dinner party, a boat ride, and a car -- appear paratactically, and seem to obliquely relate to the lines of the poem. Together this flow of images and the repetition of images of the child, all Holden himself, along with the repeated, chorus-like line "i was born in Nanaimo two blocks from the station," suggests that the film is a quotidian lyric experience -- an effort to fix and organize moments and memories induced by an encounter with the filmed images

Narrative Lyricism: *18,000 dead in gordon head*

A far different example of shifting lyricism in *Trains of Winnipeg* is *18,000 dead in gordon head: (a found film)*. Based on the most strictly narrative of Holden's *Trains of Winnipeg* poems, *18,000 dead* contrasts narrative voice-over with subjective imagery to create a lyrical meditation on experiences of memory. The poem *18,000 dead in gordon head* tells the story of the poet's rediscovery of lost film footage, the tragic murder of a teenaged girl that inspired the film, and the effect of the event on the poet's younger self. As the poem describes, the images that make up the film itself come from a video recording of the projection of the film onto a wall. The narrative, however, makes scant reference to the images of the video. One stanza that describes the filming of the footage relates to the projected images, in part describing the content of one portion of the video: "i filmed the split-levels, service stations & the air raid siren over the/ old gordon head store -- while my friend Andrew drew in oil pastel." Another line, "i even lay on my side on the road where she died," prefigures a number of images filmed side-ways from ground level that appear throughout the film.

Besides these few instances, the images of the film are predominantly blurred or unidentifiable, and they are edited into repetitive sequences. This obscurity and repetition disconnects the images from the narrative. For example, in one sequence a series of figures in superimposition walk into the Gordon Head store, their actions repeated numerous times. While these images do not relate to the lines read over them -- "for the rest of that day i'd suddenly remember what happened./ and feel guilty./ i thought it was wrong to think about other things, but/i just couldn't keep my mind on it, it would move away" -- they suggest the ghostly and repetitious experience of memory that the stanza describes. For MacDonald, these "looped" images are "a form of accompaniment" to the recited poem (MacDonald, 2007: 33). In fact, the separation between the images and the narrative suggests that the narrative itself is a product of the poet's encounter with the found footage, a response to the memories conjured by the lyrical and subjective images of the film. In this way, the narrative acts as an attempt to make sense of the images to describe their lyricism. Just as the poet aspires to "see *the other person's side of the story*," the narrative tries to "see" the story behind the lyric images produced by his other self. MacDonald notes that this attempt to bridge the distance of time and memory is a product of various media that the footage travels through, from Super 8mm to VHS to digital video, by which the "resulting film poem materializes the distance between now and then in a way the textual version of the poem cannot" (MacDonald, 2007: 35). In this sense, *18,000 dead* achieves more completely the experience that *nanaimo station* attempts to capture -- the lyric rehearsal of memory in order to (re-)appropriate it.

## Transtextuality and the Limits of Lyricism: *trains of winnipeg*

Beyond the approaches to adapting lyricism discussed above, it is important to remember that adaptation is the raison d'etre of the *Trains of Winnipeg* project. The four incarnations of the project -- book, CD, film cycle, and website -- stretch and transform Holden's poems across media, literally adapting poetry into new contexts. As Holden comments in an interview regarding the film *unbreakable bones*, the project itself emerged from the interplay between media:

> At the time, I was living in Winnipeg and visiting my parents on the [west] coast every few months. When I flew through the mountains, I shot film. When I watched the footage, I found the poem. When I write and it's going well, I hit a phrase or idea and relax, because I know I have a poem -- it's there somewhere. Sometimes, I see film and feel the same thing. What excites me about working in different disciplines is that you pick up energy and ideas crossing from one to the other. (Cole, 2006: par. 12)

In this way, each part of the broader project, each version of each poem, exists in relation to the other parts, the other versions, not as a facsimile but as a reiteration and recreation.

In his recent work on adaptation, Robert Stam has developed Gérard Genette's theory of literary transtextuality into a theory of film adaptation (itself a process of adaptation). Stam's theoretical approach to adaptation is ready-made for considering the *Trains of Winnipeg* project as a whole. Stam suggests applying Genette's transtextuality (itself an elaboration of Mikhail Bakhtin and Julia Kristeva's intertextual theories) to the analysis of film adaptations in order to help free adaptation theory from its traditional preoccupation with concerns of fidelity. Quoting Genette, Stam says that transtextuality "refer[s] to 'all that which puts one text in relation, whether manifest or secret, with other texts'" (Stam, 2005: 27).

Stam outlines Genette's five types of transtextuality, noting the potential for each to be useful to film adaptation theory. The first type, "'intertextuality' or the 'effective co-presence of two texts' in the form of quotation, plagiarism, and allusion," can be seen not only in allusions or citations of written or oral intertexts, but also "medium-specific forms," such as camera movements that reference other films (Stam, 2005: 28). As detailed above, throughout *Trains of Winnipeg*, intertextual connections to the work of other avant-garde filmmakers, especially Brakhage and Vertov, are particularly useful in determining the nature of the lyricism in the fourteen film poems. This intertextuality is literalized in the *Trains of Winnipeg* website, which features a "links" sections that includes hyperlinks to websites on or related to various intertextual connections to *Trains of Winnipeg*, including a website on Brakhage's films, a still from the Lumière Brothers' *L'Arrivée d'un train à la Ciotat* (1895), paintings by Van Gough and Monet, and poems by Al Purdy and Emily Dickinson, to name a few. These and other intertextual links speak to further interpretive connections, whether in terms of the origins of Holden's lyricism in literary influences, or other aesthetic qualities involved in the lyricism of the *Trains of Winnipeg* films.

Stam's transtextual approach is especially appropriate to an analysis of how the *Trains of Winnipeg* film-cycle functions in relation to the other parts of the *Trains of Winnipeg* project. Genette's second type, "paratext," refers to "the relation, within the totality of a literary work, between the text proper and its 'paratexts' -- titles, prefaces, postfaces, epigraphs, dedications, illustrations ... in short all the accessory messages and commentaries which surround the text" (Stam, 2005: 28). Stam adds to the literary examples of paratext by identifying "posters, trailers, reviews, interviews" and even DVD commentaries as film paratexts (Stam, 2005: 28). The subtitles of the various iterations of *Trains of Winnipeg*, from *poems* to *14 film poems* speak to this paratextual adaptation. While the difference between 'poems' and 'film poems' seems obvious, they signal a transformation inherent in the adaptation process. *Trains of Winnipeg* is not a fixed or continuous entity, but one that changes with its movements through media.

The next two transtextual types elaborate on this sense of commentary and relationship. The third transtextual type is "'metatextuality' or the critical relation between one text and another, whether the commented text is explicitly cited or only silently evoked" (Stam, 2005: 28). According to Stam, "Adaptation in this sense, can be 'readings' or 'critiques' of their source novel," including adaptations that rewrite, parody, re-contextualize and "silently evoke" sources, declared or not (Stam, 2005: 28-30). Genette's fourth type of transtextuality is "architextuality," or "the generic taxonomies suggested or refused by the titles, or subtitles of a text" (Stam, 2005: 30). Architextuality is significant to adaptations since bearing a title different from its source can indicate an "unmarked adaptation," or "misleadingly labeled adaptation," both of which can affect the status of an adaptation as an adaptation, including concerns of reception and legal issues (Stam, 2005: 30-31). Again, the subtitle of the film cycle, *14 Film Poems*, architextually defines the films as separate from, yet related to the other parts, particularly the print poems. Even individual film poems make use of this architextual distinction to signal the process of adaptation. The film version of *active pass*, for example, omits the bracketed subtitle from its source poem "active pass: (radical poet on his fortieth birthday)," a further indication of the removal of the lyric "I" and personal references from the film poem.

The film *Hitler! (revisited)* also architextually alters its source, but more importantly the film

metatextually acts as a critical reappraisal of the poem it adapts and of an early version of the films itself. Based on a narrative poem from Holden's earlier collection of poetry, *Fury*, *Hitler! (revisited)* is what Holden calls a "remix" of footage he included in his 1996 film *Hitler!* (Cole, 2006: par. 14). In an interview with Stephen Cole, Holden notes that *Hitler! (revisited)*, made with the assistance of Winnipeg filmmaker Sol Nagler, is a "deconstructed" version of the original film. Holden says, "We rethought it, remade it, stripped it to individual shots. I literally stepped on footage. We played and handled it" (Cole, 2006: par. 14). But the metatextuality of *Hitler! (revisited)* involves more than just a critical re-editing. For Holden, the process of revisiting the film cast its content in a different light, and added another critical dimension to the process: "Sol's family is Jewish, from the Warsaw ghetto. He had questions. As we worked, we talked about Niall, Hitler, Germany, mental illness. I'm big on process and hands-on filmmaking" (Cole, 2006: par. 14). MacDonald also notes that *Hitler! (revisited*) also expands on the story told in the original film and more effectively integrates its image and sound tracks (MacDonald, 2007: 29). 'Revisiting' the original poem and film of *Hitler!* provides Holden with the metatextual occasion to alter the footage to reflect these considerations that emerged from working with Nagler and to rework the adaptation to better blend the visual and the aural aspects of the film poem.

Genette's fifth and final transtextual type, "hypertextuality," is also the category that Stam argues is "most clearly relevant to adaptation" (Stam, 2005: 31). As Stam says, hypertextuality "refers to the relation between one text, which Genette calls 'hypertext,' to an anterior text or 'hypotext,' which the former transforms, modifies, elaborates, or extends" (Stam, 2005: 31). There is a communication between texts in Genette's concept of hypertextuality. The hypertext "speaks" to and of its hypotext, and would be unable to exist without it (Genette, 1997: 5). Similarly, hypertexts and hypotexts are involved in processes of reading and rereading in hypertextual chains, such as the one Stam tracks from *The Odyssey* through *The Aeneid*, James Joyce's *Ulysses*, Alberto Moravia's *Dizprezzo* and Jean-Luc Godard's *Le Mépris* (1963) (Stam, 2005: 31). Thus, hypertextuality plays a part in "the ongoing whirl of intertexual reference and transformation, of texts generating other texts in an endless process of recycling, transformation, and transmutation, with no clear point of origin" (Stam, 2005: 31). One approach to an analysis of an adaptation, then, would be to examine its hypertextual connections, not only to a single hypotext, but also to other hypertexts. The final film of the cycle, *trains of winnipeg*, hypertextually links the films to the other parts of the project. As both the title of the project and the only title that appears in each the spoken-word CD, the book of poems, and the film cycle, *trains of winnipeg* is a consistent link throughout the project. Yet while the versions of "trains of winnipeg" found on the CD and in the book are directly related (the former a spoken recitation of the latter), the film *trains of winnipeg* drastically departs from its hypertextual namesakes by eliminating words altogether.

The hypertextual links between the three versions of *trains of winnipeg* helps adapt the lyricism of the verbal poems to the visual film poem. In the *trains of winnipeg* film, the lyric "eye" of the camera and filmmaker replaces the lyric "I" of the speaking subject. But instances such as the brief glimpse of the filmmaker's reflection in the train window are a tease to the viewer. The filmmaker's "eye" does not direct the viewer to make connections with other aspects of the film. The filmmaker's presence does little to explain or to clarify the images on screen. In fact, the filmmaker's reflection disrupts the metaphoric link the film establishes between the experience of viewing the world from a train and the experience of viewing film that the film establishes in its initial visual pattern of looped

footage. The window of the trains is like a film screen; the rhythmic sounds and movements of the train are like the movement and sound of film passing through a projector. This completing instance of reflexivity works against lyricism, as the filmmaker's first appearance breaks the metaphor produced by the visual pattern. The reappearance of the filmmaker later in the film repeats this disruption. The cacophonous noises that accompany this second manifestation, in which the filmmaker's image is digitally distorted, interrupt the sound pattern of the film. Here the filmmaker's presence signals another lyrical breakdown, the defeat of the film's "melos," replacing musicality with cacophony. Thus rather than being a unifying or productive presence, the filmmaker as subject becomes a disruptive figure.

And yet, while the filmmaker in *trains of winnipeg* disrupts a sense of unified lyrical subjectivity, the hypertextual connection between the film and its sources imports the lyricism of the spoken and written poems into the film poem. For a viewer familiar with other parts of the project, the experience of viewing the film carries with it the words of the poem, whether as read in the book collection or heard on the CD. The frequent repetition of images in the film recalls the repetition of the line "i am a train of winnipeg" in the other versions of the poem. Although the film may replace lyrical subjectivity and musicality with reflexivity and cacophony, it also retains these elements hypertextually.

This hypertextual connection between the lyricism of the poem and the lyrical disruption of the film evokes the concept of the lyric/anti-lyric proposed by Douglas Barbour. According to Barbour, lyric/anti-lyric poetry challenges lyric conventions (Barbour, 2001: 16). For Barbour the lyric/anti-lyric does not completely break with the lyric, but rather plays with elements of the lyric, at times parodically, but always pushing the limits of lyricism (Barbour, 2001: 15-16). The least "faithful" adaptation of the film cycle, *trains of winnipeg* tests this anti-lyric limit, attempting to transform the language-based lyricism of the poem versions of *trains of winnipeg* into a purely visual lyricism: a lyric "eye" freed from the lyric "I," in the manner similar to Brakhage's aspirations in *Metaphor on Vision*. And it is here that the *Trains of Winnipeg* film cycle achieves its most complete adaptation of lyricism, by reinventing the lyricism of Holden's poetry in a filmic context as lyric film.

The successful adaptation of lyricism to film evident in the *trains of winnipeg* short suggests that the lyric film requires the visually focused approach favoured by Brakhage, abandoning the language of the literary lyric in the process. But while *trains of winnipeg* is perhaps the most compelling film in the *Trains of Winnipeg* cycle, it is not alone in proposing lyrical possibilities for film. Other films in the cycle, *love in the white city* and *nanaimo station* in particular, manage to capture a filmic lyricism that works alongside the literary lyric. The recitation of poetry in these films acts in concert with the lyric images, sometimes in harmony, other times with tension or dissonance, but nonetheless presenting lyricism through their adaptation. In instances where Holden's adaptation is less successful, as in *neighbours walk softly*, the problem is not so much that the films do not adapt lyricism, but rather that they do not marry their filmic lyricism with the lyricism of the poetry they include as well as the others. Holden adapts his work best when it is allowed to flow from filmic means and adapt the literary lyricism of the source poems into this filmic context. And it is in these instances that the *Trains of Winnipeg* cycle suggests possibilities for other adaptations of poetry to film, as well as critical discussions of the connections between film and poetry. In this way, *Trains of Winnipeg* is perhaps even more avant-garde than MacDonald gives it credit. More than simply

offering "a new cinematic form of public poetry reading" (MacDonald, 2007: 38), *Trains of Winnipeg* suggests new ways of imagining lyricism and other modes of lyric expression. In either case, it is by considering the lyrical potential of film that one can follow the track towards the poetic in film.

Notes

[1] By way of comparison, two other Canadian short film adaptations of poetry, Elizabeth Lewis's *A Kite is a Victim* and Bruce McDonald's *Elimination Dance*, follow these approaches. The animated *A Kite is a Victim* literalizes many of the metaphors from Leonard Cohen's poem of the same name, nearly emptying them of their possibilities. Similarly, McDonald's adaptation of Michael Ondaatje's long poem imposes a narrative situation onto a non-narrative series of dance calls. Both films have their virtues as adaptations (*Elimination Dance* is particularly innovative in its deployment of various narrative levels to transform its list-like source), but neither aims for the formal adaptation of lyrical qualities found in *Trains of Winnipeg*.

[2] MacDonald's article offers a brief but comprehensive overview of the history of what might be called the film poem. MacDonald traces this history from the early avant-garde of Charles Sheeler and Paul Strand's *Manhatta* (1921) to the American experimental cinema of James Broughton, Stan Brakhage, and Hollis Frampton, to the three recent film poems he analyzes in depth, Rick Hancox's *Waterworx* (1982), Matthais Müller's *Nebel* (2000), and Holden's *Trains of Winnipeg*.

[3] By way of clarification, I have chosen to indicate the difference between each part of Holden's project in the following manner: the project itself will be called the *Trains of Winnipeg* project; the collection of poems will be called *Trains of Winnipeg: poems*; the final short film of the project will be called *trains of winnipeg*. I base these typographical choices on the way each different version of the title "Trains of Winnipeg" appears in their respective parts of the project. I also treat each of the fourteen films as individual short films, departing from MacDonald who sees *Trains of Winnipeg* as a feature film (MacDonald, 2007: 29). I do so for two reasons: first, a number of the films have been screened on their own; second, the *Trains of Winnipeg* DVD (2005) allows one to view the films one at a time and in any order.

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Institute of Film & Television Studies, University of Nottingham, University Park, Nottingham, NG7 2RD, UK
E-Mail: scope@nottingham.ac.uk | Tel: +44 (0)115 951 4261 | Fax: +44 (0)115 951 4270