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# Brave New Forms: Adaptation, Remediation, and Intertextuality in the Multimodal World of Hugo Cabret

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Brave New Forms:

Adaptation, Remediation, and Intertextuality in the Multimodal World of Hugo Cabret

by

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Thesis

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in

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Thesis Committee:

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## Abstract

Digital technologies have changed the way readers approach, experience, and respond to texts. In our hyper-mediated culture, images and texts converge and disseminate across multiple media platforms, changing once-passive readers and spectators into active agents in the intellectual and creative process of interpretation. This thesis examines the multimodal world of *Hugo Cabret*—the hybrid graphic novel, the film adaptation, and the novel’s official website—in an effort to better understand how intertextuality, convergence culture, and remediation play with media forms, represent an ideological shift toward participatory culture, and rework older, traditional media in the creation of new media and new media users. *The Invention of Hugo Cabret* and its surrounding paratexts are but one example of how our construction of childhood is slowly changing to acknowledge the skills and abilities fostered by our digital age as readers synthesize, seek out, and interact with multiple forms of media.

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## Introduction: The Multimodal World of Hugo Cabret

This thesis explores three key texts: Brian Selznick's hybrid graphic novel, *The Invention of Hugo Cabret* (2007); Martin Scorsese's film adaptation, *Hugo* (2011); and the official website for the book, [www.theinventionofhugocabret.com](http://www.theinventionofhugocabret.com), in an effort to examine the influence and changing role of digital technology in the production and consumption of texts for child and young adult readers. In our digital, hypertext age, our perceptions and ideologies surrounding childhood and children are slowly starting to change from traditionally held views of child-as-innocent to more progressive perceptions of child-as-capable. When I began this project, I initially sought to understand the shifts taking place in media, but soon discovered that this also implies, requires, and responds to changes in media-user behavior, as constructed in visually dynamic and challenging texts such as David Macaulay's *Black and White* (1990), David Weisner's *The Three Pigs* (2001), Shaun Tan's *The Arrival* (2007), and Brian Selznick's *The Invention of Hugo Cabret* (2007) and *Wonderstruck* (2011). In order to situate my reading of *The Invention of Hugo Cabret* (hereafter alternatively referred to as *Hugo Cabret*), I first needed to identify the key theories, people, and terms that would ground and guide my research. The following section does just this and endeavors to prepare readers for the upcoming chapters.

### Setting the Scene

Throughout my discussion of the multimodal world of Hugo Cabret, I use the following terms and concepts that may or may not be familiar to all readers. *Multimodal* is one such term that is used to describe different and/or multiple modes, forms, or platforms, such as a website, which may include text, images, and audio. *The Oxford*

*English Dictionary* defines multimodal as “characterized by several different modes of occurrence or activity; incorporating or utilizing several different methods or systems” (“multimodal” OED). Multimodal is a complex and often vague term, as it is applied across the curricula and can refer to a variety of texts, platforms, or interface exchanges; to clarify, my usage of the term follows that of the *OED* definition and is closely aligned with Henry Jenkins’s “transmedia storytelling.” Transmedia storytelling describes stories that spread out across multiple media platforms, which is how I will connect *The Invention of Hugo Cabret*, *Hugo*, and the “Hugo Cabret” website.

Another key term vital to the discussion of *Hugo Cabret* is *hybrid*, as in a hybrid text or hybrid graphic novel, the latter of which also needs defining. Building from the *OED*’s figurative definition, “derived from heterogeneous or incongruous sources; having mixed character; composed of two diverse elements,” a hybrid text is that which includes elements from different genres or blurs genre distinctions. Innovative and multimodal texts borrow, adapt, and refashion genres through creative play with form and conventions, challenging and often defying standard classification systems. Witnessed in the melding of illustration and narration that often takes place in *graphic novels*, defined as “[a] full-length story published as a book in comic-strip format” (“graphic novel” OED), such texts often borrow from comic-book tradition, incorporating stylistic or visual features often associated with comics, such as the “juxtaposition of words and pictures” (McCloud 21). *The Invention of Hugo Cabret* is a *hybrid* graphic novel because it borrows from a variety of genres—picture books, comics, film, photography, to name a few—while still grounding itself within the illustrated narrative tradition familiar to graphic novels.

This borrowing and blending of genres and styles creates the opportunity for *intertextuality*, which refers to the relationship between texts. Derived (or perhaps radically revised) from Bakhtin’s theory of the dialogic text and first coined in the 1960s by Julia Kristeva, intertextuality proposes that “any text is constructed as a mosaic of quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another” (Allen 39). Graham Allen’s *Intertextuality: The New Critical Idiom* (2000), provides a book-length study of intertextuality across several theoretical perspectives and discusses how reading and interpretation “becomes a process of moving between texts” wherein “meaning becomes something which exists between a text and all the other texts to which it refers and relates, moving out from the independent text into a network of textual relations” (Allen 1). Literary allusions are a common example of intertextuality or the relationship between texts. In this multilayered conversation, “the communication between the author and reader is always partnered by a communication or intertextual relation between poetic words and their prior existence in past poetic texts. Authors communicate to readers at the same moments as their words or texts communicate the existence of past texts within them” (Allen 39). In other words, the reading of one text often relies on a network of other texts, or can encourage the reader, implicitly or explicitly, to make connections to a variety of other media. *Hugo Cabret* offers this opportunity for readers by calling forth “past texts” such as George Méliès’ *A Trip to the Moon*, making intertextual references both in the narrative and in the illustrations.

This particular process of referencing—or more specifically, recreating—older texts is also connected to Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin’s theory of remediation. Discussed in Bolter and Grusin’s book, *Remediation: Understanding New Media* (1999),



*remediation* adopts a term “used by educators as a euphemism for the task of bringing up lagging students to expected level of performance” to “express the way in which one medium is seen by our culture as reforming or improving upon another” (59). As with *intertextuality*, there is an inherent doubleness in the term, a “double logic” wherein “our culture wants both to multiply its media and to erase all traces of mediation” (5). As technology advances, users desire a more “immediate” presence that seemingly erases the medium itself in order to “leave us in the presence of the thing represented”—yet this is seemingly impossible as new media (in its quest for immediacy) relies on or actively reworks old media forms through the process of remediation (6). Put most directly, and in the final lines of Bolter and Grusin’s book, “the true novelty would be a new medium that did not refer for its meaning to other media at all. For our culture, such mediation without remediation seems to be impossible” (271). Much like a structural approach to language, wherein we are born into a predetermined language, our media language consists of that which came before, and we are constantly reworking old media in the creation of something new.

I find it helpful to view *remediation* as it is presented on the book’s cover: re(media)tion, or even (re)mediation; both help visually express the refashioning of media through the complex process of adapting, adopting, remaking, recreating, and representing media. For Bolter and Grusin, *remediation* is “the formal logic by which new media refashion prior media forms. Along with immediacy and hypermediacy, remediation is one of the three traits of our genealogy of new media” (273). *Immediacy* refers to “a style of visual representation whose goal is to make the viewer forget the presence of the medium,” as mentioned above, while *hypermediacy*, on the other hand,

seeks to “remind the viewer of the medium” or make viewers aware of the medium itself (272). Throughout my discussion of *The Invention of Hugo Cabret*, *Hugo*, and the “Hugo website,” I explore the ways in which each text works as an act of remediation by refashioning older media forms to draw attention to the very forms themselves (*hypermediacy*) for various narrative, aesthetic, and cultural goals.

Applying these theories to children’s literature may at once seem like an obvious yet complicated move. As a culture, we as readers and consumers have assumptions about children and the products and culture available to and for children, in the form of books, toys, films, or other broadly defined media. In many ways, and despite (or perhaps because of) our technological revolution and 21<sup>st</sup> century advancements, we still cling to romantic, idealized ideas about childhood, viewing The Child (as a societal construct) as innocent and in need of protecting. As Henry Jenkins writes in *The Children’s Culture Reader*, “our modern conception of the innocent child presumes its universality across historical periods and across widely divergent cultures” (15). Many scholars have addressed the myth of child in essays, chapters, and books that can and do fill rows upon rows of shelves in libraries—for our purposes here, a simple foundation will suffice to lay the groundwork for the forthcoming discussion. Recognizing The Child as a construct (innocent, connected to nature, in need of protection) with ideological weight referential to adults (as adults we need to protect the children: Think of the children, save the children!) will help ground the discussions in upcoming chapters about the subtle shift taking place in how we perceive children as no longer incapable, passive, and innocent but rather capable, active, and knowledgeable.

This shift coincides with the larger changes taking place in our media landscape. In my discussion of active readers and media users I am largely indebted to the work of Henry Jenkins. In Jenkins' book, *Convergence Culture*, he describes how the "circulation of media content . . . depends heavily on consumers' active participation," giving rise to *convergence* culture (3). Active participation is an important concept with implications for our late-Victorian constructions of childhood. Viewing the child as capable of participating in this cultural shift called *convergence*, where in consumers "seek out new information and make connections among dispersed media content," suggests that children are (or are capable of becoming) knowledgeable, active, and interactive (3). Jenkins calls this new behavior *participatory culture*, which represents the active work fans and media consumers do in the creation and circulation of new content (331). The digital age has opened up new spaces for participation, intertextuality, convergence, and remediation, but it also has impacts beyond the screen.

Eliza T. Dresang's theory and book bearing the same name, *Radical Change: Books for Youth in a Digital Age*, connects the impacts of digital technology specifically to children: "Society is changing, and so are perceptions of youth. This represents a radical change in culture for young readers" (*Radical Change* 57). Dresang identifies an alternative ideology of childhood that incorporates digital age activities and views "the-child-as-capable-and-seeking-connection" (57). Writing seven years before Jenkins, some of Dresang's arguments anticipate the rise and impacts of participatory culture: "Through the Internet, young people can be heard more loudly and clearly in the dawning of the twenty-first century than ever before, and they are making supportive connections with other youth and with adults" (57). Significantly, these changes are also reflected in other

media forms, specifically in the literature produced for child readers. Dresang calls this “Radical Change,” and identifies three types of Radical Change identified in literature for youth, including: (1) changing forms and formats that reflect changes in children’s thinking and learning; (2) changing perspectives and diversity encouraged by the global village; and (3) expanding horizons and changing boundaries (58). Equally important to Radical Change as a theory are three digital age concepts that represent changes in literature for youth: *connectivity*, which refers to the connections readers make with texts and communities; *interactivity*, which refers to both the reader and the book, whose formats enable a more active, involved reading; and *access*, which refers to breaking down of barriers in literature for youth (12-13). Connecting the changes taking place in culture (particularly in regards to digital technology) to literature specifically for children provides another lens to view dynamic and challenging texts, such as *Hugo Cabret*, and opens up an opportunity for critical analysis and discussion of both the text and the reader.

An important idea foregrounded by both Jenkins and Dresang is the idea of “active” participation. For Dresang specifically, the interactivity fostered by digital environments and digital texts impacts the way readers understand, navigate, and read a text: the process shifts from one of *passive* reading to *active* reading; for Jenkins, spectatorship is no longer simply a passive viewing, but there now exists a plethora of opportunities for active engagement and participation across various media platforms and in the meaning-making process. Throughout my discussion of *The Invention of Hugo Cabret*, I refer to the complex reading process—the synthesization of image and text, and specifically reading image sequences in place of narrative—as an *active* reading

experience. Similarly, navigating and exploring the Hugo Cabret website requires an *active* participation as a hypertext that responds to cursor movement and mouse clicks and key presses. Additionally, and significantly, the process of interpreting intertextuality within the book, film, and website, also requires *active* reading and engagement with the text. Therefore, as a children's text, *Hugo Cabret*, with a child audience, can also work to foster active and critical reading, encouraging readers to make complex connections across media and time periods as they learn to recognize and interpret intertextuality.

An example of intertextuality immediately available to readers of *Hugo Cabret* is the direct reference to George Méliès as a character and historical figure (in both the book and the film). George Méliès was an illusionist and early French filmmaker who pioneered special effects and fantastical (fantasy, science fiction) filmmaking. One of his most celebrated films, *A Trip to the Moon* (1902), depicts a voyage to the moon and follows several astronomers as they explore the moon's surface, encounter strange inhabitants, and return to Earth in their bullet-like capsule. In addition to the elaborate set designs and trick editing, Méliès also had each of the frames hand-colored, creating a sense of wonder and spectacle for his audience. *Hugo Cabret* features both Méliès and *A Trip to the Moon*. As an antagonist to the main character, Hugo, Méliès, known in the beginning of the story as "Papa Georges," appears to be a miserable old man who foils Hugo as he attempts to steal parts from Méliès' toy booth. As the story unfolds, Hugo uncovers Méliès' drawings and films and slowly pieces together his past identity. Brian Selznick's illustrations recreate famous shots from *A Trip to the Moon*, among others, creating an intertextual reading experience that connects *Hugo Cabret* to Georges Méliès, *A Trip to the Moon*, and other works of early silent cinema. As I discuss in the third

chapter, Selznick provides links to websites and additional historical information about Georges Méliès and early cinema both in his book and on his website, encouraging readers to seek out more information and learn to make connections across different media.

### Scripting the Argument

According to various scholars and educators, hybrid texts support interactive reading experiences by synthesizing texts and images into a new visual form that shifts the reader's role from passive spectator to active participant in the meaning-making process. In our digital, hypertext age, spectatorship now calls for and includes active readers who engage and interact with the text. Brian Selznick's *The Invention of Hugo Cabret* pushes the boundaries of standard classification—is it a graphic novel? picture book? something else?—through its clever intertextuality that (re)introduces readers to the magic of the moving image. Hybrid narratives like this one ask us to reimagine the relationships between reader and text, image and narrative, shifting the mode of participation from one of consumption to production through the synthesization of image and text, driven here by the unique relationship between cinema and (graphic) narrative.

In his feature film, *Hugo*, Martin Scorsese further remediates Selznick's hybrid text, thereby producing an adaptation that is both inspired by yet different from *The Invention of Hugo Cabret*. What interests me specifically is how this particular adaptation works as an act of remediation (à la Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin) that reworks or refashions Selznick's pioneering illustrated text into a work that speaks to and is made possible by our digital culture and technology. Under this lens, we can also choose to view Selznick's text as a reimagined interpretation of George Méliès' films, reexamined

in this new hybrid form that analogizes and bridges some of the first forays into the film medium with this new play with image texts, adapting cinematic techniques to produce a new form of graphic narrative.

In choosing to view *The Invention of Hugo Cabret* as an act of remediation that reworks, remakes, and essentially reanimates the cinema of Georges Méliès, the traditional definition of remediation is challenged, as is our common understanding of adaptation. In the case of the Hugo collective (the book, the film, and Brian Selznick's website), the process of adaptation takes place in a multidimensional, multimodal space; where celluloid is revisioned through illustration, which is then reimagined through film and digital technology, which is additionally presented in an interactive interface where readers and viewers can interact with the text, the film, and additional material. As an example of convergence culture and akin to transmedia storytelling, readers partake in participatory experiences that both reflect and respond to today's digital environment.

By examining Hugo as a complex interaction between classic cinema, graphic novels, and digital technology, I hope to join with those scholars who work to challenge the misconceptions of what children's media and illustrated texts are, do, and are capable of doing. One of the questions guiding my research is "What does it mean for children's literature to remediate classic cinema?" In surveying the reviews of Martin Scorsese's *Hugo*, most critics and reviewers lauded Scorsese's work as a "love letter to cinema," and praised his ability to (re)introduce film history to a new generation of viewers. What most commenters left out, however, was the consideration of *Hugo* as a children's film, except in sentiments similar to Adam Cook's review in *Cinemezzo*: "that *Hugo* is a family film should not be a deterring factor." Indeed, Cook's assessment, though largely well

meaning, perpetuates attitudes about children's literature and film as frivolous or incapable of producing powerful works also relevant to an adult audience. Through my discussion of *Hugo* I hope to shed light not only on its cultural relevance, but also on its importance as an experimental work of art and a set of dynamic texts each challenging their respective forms in exciting ways.

*The Invention of Hugo Cabret* engages readers and shifts our expectations for spectatorship by calling for a reader that actively participates in the meaning-making process. No longer passive, the reader works to make meaning by synthesizing image and text. The opening sequence of the text is wordless, featuring a series of illustrations that mimic the look and movement of early cinema. Through page turns, the reader facilitates and creates a sense of movement as the illustrations grow larger in size and draw the reader in closer to the subject. By discussing these moments as cinematic in form and inspiration, I will make a larger connection between this novel as a hybrid form somewhere between a graphic novel and a film storyboard that actively includes conventions of both cinema and narrative, which therefore creates a new form made simultaneously reflective of and influential for film and film adaptation.

For many scholars, the study of adaptation is tied closely to classification struggles and the field's hybrid status as something between literary criticism and film studies. Within the past fifty years, adaptation has gained steady attention and publication, but the problem of prejudice still remains. As Imelda Whelehan points out in *Adaptations: From Text to Screen, Screen to Text*, the chief problem lies in the "conscious and unconscious" notions viewers, readers, and scholars bring to the study and discussion of adapted works (3). She proposes a cultural studies approach that



“foregrounds the activities and consumption” that would shelve “considerations of the aesthetic of cultural worthiness of the object of study” (18). Opening up the field in this way not only lessons the politics of new critical evaluation—is the adaptation *worthy* enough or aesthetically relevant—but makes room for readers and mass-media fans and, significantly, the recognition of the work they do as active participants and viewers.

By proposing adaptation as a production model congruent with the activity of fandom I mean to disavow the notion of a passive spectator. In our digital age, media spectatorship has changed, and I am greatly indebted to Henry Jenkins’s work on participatory culture for my own understanding of interaction and production in regards to adaptation. *Hugo* is a special case in that it simultaneously remediates and participates in adaptation on several levels: refashioning early cinema, narrative, and illustrated texts while allowing viewers to actively engage through intertextuality.

#### Casting the Key Questions

Brian Selznick’s hybrid novel, *The Invention of Hugo Cabret*, works to rehabilitate early cinema by remediating Georges Méliès’ films into an illustrated text that challenges our expectations of children’s literature, our ideas of spectatorship, and defies standard classification. Likewise, Martin Scorsese’s *Hugo* functions as an adaptation of *The Invention of Hugo Cabret* that works to reimagine the text in film form while also rehabilitating the classic cinema to which Selznick visually alludes. Finally, Selznick’s website, [www.theinventionofhugocabret.com](http://www.theinventionofhugocabret.com), serves as site for active participation by expanding on the book and film, thereby remediating both texts in an active, multimodal platform.

Some of the key concerns explored in this thesis include challenging our assumptions of adaptations by reimagining adapted works as a form of remediation that adopt and refashion other (and sometimes older) media forms to create something new. Additionally, I also explore the ways new media continues to engage with and rehabilitate older forms through my examination of Hugo (the book, the film, and the website). How do these various forms engage the reader and shift the mode of participation from passive to active spectatorship? What does it mean for a children's text to remediate classic (and conventionally assumed as "adult") cinema? How do texts like Hugo challenge our expectations of children's literature and children's media? How does *The Invention of Hugo Cabret* utilize film conventions to rework the novel into a cinematic text? What does it mean for a traditionally older form of media (the book) to refashion a newer form (film)? How does this shift our ideas of narrative and particularly our expectations of an illustrated text or graphic narrative? How do these dynamic reading experiences influence or support young readers' development of aesthetic and critical reading? These questions about form, adaptation, remediation, and their influence for children and adult audiences alike are considered alongside a careful aesthetic analysis of *The Invention of Hugo Cabret* and *Hugo*.

### Lights, Camera, Action

The stage is set, the key players are cast, and now it is time to begin. This Introduction has endeavored to lay a foundation for the upcoming discussions of the multimodal world of Hugo Cabret. Several of the key terms and theories pertinent to the examination of *The Invention of Hugo Cabret* (alternatively referred to as *Hugo Cabret*), *Hugo*, and the Hugo Website ([www.theinventionofhugocabret.com](http://www.theinventionofhugocabret.com)), particularly

*multimodal, remediation, intertextuality, and convergence*, have been introduced and will be discussed in greater depth throughout this thesis. Chapter One, “New Picture Books, Old Cinema: *The Invention of Hugo Cabret*” discusses Brian Selznick’s hybrid graphic novel as a “radical” text that remediates early cinema and supports an active reading experience that responds to and is made possible by our digital environment. Chapter Two, “Adaptation as Remediation: Martin Scorsese’s *Hugo*,” takes a look at the 2011 feature film adaptation, *Hugo*, under the lens of remediation, with a consideration of the role of technological advancements in the play between immediacy and hypermediacy throughout the film. Chapter Three: “Click Here to Enter: Intertextuality, Convergence, and Hugo Cabret’s Website” looks at the multimodal space beyond the written page and examines opportunities for connectivity and active participation with the text in author websites, specifically Brian Selznick’s website for *The Invention of Hugo Cabret*. Lastly, this thesis concludes a brief Conclusion and Bibliography.

#### The Title Screen

*Picture yourself sitting in the darkness, like the beginning of a movie. On screen, the sun will soon rise, and you will find yourself zooming towards a train station in the middle of the city. You will rush through the doors into a crowded lobby. You will eventually spot a*

*boy amid the crowd, and he will start to move through the train station.*

*Follow him throughout this journey and throughout the pages of the thesis, because this is Hugo Cabret. His story is full of secrets, and he’s waiting for you to begin.*

(Adapted from the Introduction to *The Invention of Hugo Cabret* by Brian Selznick)

## Chapter One: New Picture Book, Old Cinema:

### *The Invention of Hugo Cabret*

Set in a 1931 Parisian train station, *The Invention of Hugo Cabret* tells the story of an orphaned boy named Hugo and his quest to reconnect with his late father. Abandoned by his uncle and caretaker, Hugo secretly lives behind the walls of the train station taking care of the clocks and tinkering with a broken automaton discovered by his father. In his attempts to fix the machine, Hugo steals from a bitter old shopkeeper, who is later revealed to be the early magician and filmmaker, Georges Méliès. Secret adventures and discoveries ensue as Hugo becomes more and more interested in deciphering the automaton's drawing—a sketch of a famous shot from Méliès's film *A Trip to the Moon* (1902). Hugo's discoveries lead him to uncover information about early cinema and Georges Méliès in particular, reawakening an interest in the magical films seemingly forgotten in Hugo's time.

Brian Selznick, author of *The Invention of Hugo Cabret*, has no idea what to call his book, and he's not alone. Several scholars, librarians, and booksellers have struggled over the genre of *Hugo Cabret*—Is it a comic book? Graphic novel? Picture book? Where do I shelve it?—and have adopted a plethora of terms to try and describe it. Some scholars have avoided the struggle, championing instead the book's narrative work in restoring the genre of historical fiction in children's literature, celebrating the genre's sweep of the Newberry Medal (*Good Masters! Sweet Ladies! Voices from a Medieval Village*), Caldecott Medal (*The Invention of Hugo Cabret*), and Corretta Scott King Award (*Elijah of Buxton*) in 2008 (Rycick and Rosler 163). And, while it is certainly true that *Hugo Cabret*, set in 1930s Paris, is a work of historical fiction, the book object itself,

with nearly 300 of its 533 pages filled with wordless illustration, continually asserts itself as a formally complex text. Currently, the limited scholarship available on *Hugo Cabret* discusses the book as a “graphic novel,” “radical book,” “picture book” and “fusion book,” discussing how the text exists as a hybrid work that blends together various visual and textual elements (Letcher, 2008 and Tan, 2011; Dresang, 2009; American Library Association, 2008; Evans, 2011). Brian Selznick delineates *Hugo Cabret* as a “novel in words and pictures,” but states, “that it is not exactly a novel, not quite a picture book, not really a graphic novel, or a flip book or a movie, but a combination of all these things” (“A Letter from Brian Selznick”). So, where does that leave us? For reasons that I hope will become clear, I will discuss *Hugo Cabret* as a hybrid graphic novel, an illustrated text that incorporates images and narrative in a compelling, multifaceted way that simultaneously arises out of, speaks to, and is made possible by our digital environment.

How to classify such a text—and why it matters (if it matters)—is a question scholars have been pondering in the wake of books such as Macaulay’s *Black and White*, a picture book which, according to the title page, “appears to contain a number of stories that do not necessarily occur at the same time”; Sherman Alexie’s *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part Time Indian*, which blends cartoons and illustrations into the narrative; Shaun Tan’s *The Arrival*, a wordless picture book that tells the story of an immigrant’s struggle to communicate and find work in a foreign land; and *The Invention of Hugo Cabret*, which uses sequences of wordless illustration to tell parts of the story in place of the written narrative. These works capture the attention of critics and scholars because they are challenging books; they challenge the reader through the confluence of semiotic

sign systems and modes of reading, and they challenge the form by incorporating a variety of visual styles and genres. In order to engage with hybrid texts such as these, the reader must draw upon a diverse set of skills and partake in multiple forms of literacy. The beauty of these books, however, is the fluidity with which these semiotic shifts take place—the reader herself may not even be fully aware that she is engaging in multiple literacies at once, but is instead focused on interacting with and understanding the text. By unpacking some of the individual genres informing, and therefore creating, the hybrid novel *Hugo Cabret*, the multiple literacies at work will highlight not only the educational benefit of hybrid texts, but also reveal the ways in which different media interact and refashion one another through the process of remediation.

*The Invention of Hugo Cabret* is “not quite a picture book,” yet despite its initial appearance, retains some picture book conventions. While its substantial page count causes the book to look and feel like a novel: its hardcover dimensions, 2 x 5.9 x 8.2 inches, create an object more akin to a novel than your average 32 page picture book; it’s what’s on the inside (and stamped on the cover) that reveals its picture book heritage. The front cover of the book jacket features eye-catching primary colors, with the title printed on a ribbon-like banner over a yellow and gold background of mechanical gears, with a rich blue backdrop of a silhouetted rooftop scene and luminescent white moon. The spine and back cover feature one continuous image, a monochromatic illustration a boy’s face over a dark grey background, with the author’s last name printed in a sans-serif font in light grey at the top of the spine, and the book title printed in white in a serif font at the bottom. The illustration of the boy is dark and mysterious; his expression is relatively neutral, and the subtle highlighting draws attention to the boy’s eyes, suggesting the

visual significance of the book. When these visual elements are read together, the book jacket represents a mashup of styles: the vibrancy of picture books; the darker, more somber illustrative nature of some graphic novels; and the textured, grainy feel of early cinema.

As indicated above, the book jacket is emblazoned with the gold seal of the Caldecott Medal, which likewise merits discussion. According the Association for Library Service to Children (a division of the American Library Association) website, the Caldecott Medal is awarded annually “to the artist of the most distinguished American picture book for children” from the preceding year. This award denotes, rather unequivocally, that *The Invention of Hugo Cabret* is a picture book. The accompanying write up celebrates *Hugo Cabret’s* innovative quality: “From an opening shot of the full moon setting over an awakening Paris in 1931, this tale casts a new light on the picture book form” (*ALA*). As a narrative that deals largely with the birth of cinema, a new visual form that greatly impacted, and continues to impact, storytelling, it seems fitting that book’s own formal characteristics are inventive and challenging. The *ALA’s* passage concludes with a concise discussion of the book’s melding of “suspenseful text and wordless double-page spreads,” showcasing how “neither words nor pictures alone tell this story” (“2008 Caldecott Medal and Honor Books”). The illustrations do substantial narrative work: the lack of written text calls for readers to read the images and to actively make meaning from the juxtaposition and sequencing of images.

Picture book scholarship has a somewhat complicated history in that, until relatively recently, picture books *as* picture books—with an emphasis on the form and illustration *in relation* to narrative—were rarely discussed. The discussion of illustration

as its own vehicle for communication, and indeed picture books as a subset of children's literature with distinct characteristics, seems largely (though not wholly) ignored until the early 1980s. Perry Nodelman's trailblazing book, *Words About Pictures: The Narrative Art of Children's Picture Books*, is among the first substantial studies of this unique narrative form. While acknowledging the more universal communication afforded by pictures, Nodelman repeatedly emphasizes the complexity of images and their relationship to text. In synthesizing these two modes of expression, the reader "depend[s] not just on [the] understanding of visual competences and codes of signification . . . but also on the intersecting relationships of both with each other," as picture books are "a subtle and complex form of communication" (21-22). In order for a picture book to communicate, and for a reader to understand, a surprisingly sophisticated set of semiotic skills must be employed. This assertion, as discussed by Nodelman and others, requires us to revisit illustrated texts with a critical eye for the "visual and verbal codes" at work in the book (21).

These codes are informed by a variety of elements and factors, several of which begin to register before a single word is read or picture is looked at (48). Book size, shape, color, and even texture, all convey information about the book, and, to the more experienced reader, set up expectations for how to approach the book. Again, *Hugo Cabret* is a heavy, thick book. At first glance, it hardly seems like a picture book, despite its brightly illustrated cover. Knowing nothing of the book's contents, and with a limited repertoire of reading experiences, one could comfortably assume that a traditional novel exists between the book's covers. This tension mimics the play between the images and



the text within pages of the book that continuously challenges readers' expectations of it as both a tactile and an aesthetic object.

Further, the tension created by the book jacket alone—the colorful front coupled with the black and white portrait—represents this play with form and expectations, and is worth lingering over. According to Nodelman, “We can and do tell books by their covers; we use the visual information we find there as a foundation for our response to the rest of the book. Illustrators often try to create appropriate expectations by pictures on covers or dust jackets that appear nowhere else in a book and that sum up the essential nature of the story” (49). Nowhere else in the book is there an illustration matching or similar to the design on the front cover, but hundreds of pages are filled with the textured, black and white pencil drawings, and nearly as many depict that same boy, Hugo. Before reading the book, this cover likely provides little information beyond that which is readily identified: mechanical gears, a moon, and a boy. But after completing the novel, the book jacket comes to represent a near cohesive depiction of the story that invites readers into the narrative.

The boy, Hugo, tinkers with mechanical toys and wants to be a magician. While novel's attention is divided between the familial plot, an orphaned boy and his quest to reconnect with his late father, and a larger mystery that also involves his mechanical automaton and a forgotten magician and filmmaker, the emphasis on spectacle and magic remains a strong undercurrent that unites these stories. With this in mind, the cover takes on new significance: The use of primary colors, ribboned text, and prominent name ('Hugo Cabret'), all contained within a rectangular frame, stylistically resemble entertainment posters (i.e., advertisements for films, magicians, stage acts. etc.) of the

early 20th century. Vibrant and eye-catching, the colorful movie poster was meant to draw people into the theatre or venue, much like the book cover draws readers into the text. This is perhaps why the front cover alone contains the colorful image: in shape and style it reads much like movie poster. The spine and back cover are devoid of this styling, therefore emphasizing, through deliberate framing, the rectangular shape of the design.

Removing the dust jacket, the book's cover is solid black, with a white, thinly-looped rectangular border framing the front and back cover: a stylistic nod to the titles and intertitles of silent cinema. Continuing the cinematic motif, the endpapers are a rich red color, mimicking the curtains that would hang in front of the screens at the theatre. The front matter continues the title card theme, with the title of the book on each of the first two pages, and the dedication page similar, but this time, the interior of the frame is white, as if illuminated with light from the projector. The contents, introduction, and chapters continue in this fashion, moving through the cinematic tale until, at the end of the story, a two-page solid-black spread reads simply, in centered, white, capital letters, "THE END." There is even a "credits" sequence in the back matter that includes information about the film stills and illustrations contained within the text, with additional information and links to websites and online photo galleries. Of course, between these pages, several cinematic events are happening with the image sequences and within the illustrations themselves, to which I will soon return. For now, our audience awaits.

As Nodelman states, "All visual images, even the most apparently representational ones, do imply a viewer, do require a knowledge of learned competencies and cultural assumptions before they can be rightly understood" (17). The

implied viewer and reader for children's literature and picture books includes both the implied child reader and the implied adult reader, who will approach the text differently based on their level of experience. That is not to say that the adult viewer always brings more knowledge to picture books, in fact, the opposite can be true, especially if they have little experience with the medium. In analyzing formal features of *Hugo Cabret*—the dust jacket, cover, end papers, and front matter—I approach the text with a certain amount of background knowledge and experience that may or may not be available to other readers, both child and adult. This includes, but is not limited to, certain cultural knowledge and visual repertoire of early cinema, advertisements, and elaborate posters. A reader unfamiliar with these elements may not interpret the images and text the same way; a phenomena discussed at length by noted literary theorist, Louise M. Rosenblatt.

Writing in the late 1970s and 1980s, Rosenblatt's Reader Response theories have been influential in understanding the reader's contribution to the reading experience. Her chapter, "Efferent and Aesthetic Reading," from *The Reader, the Text, the Poem: The Transactional Theory of the Literary Work*, is particularly useful for illustrating how one's prior experiences influence the construction of meaning. Rosenblatt identifies two kinds of reading, aesthetic and nonaesthetic, which account for the difference in the reader's focus of attention: nonaesthetic reading is focused largely on the information acquired after the reading (logic), while aesthetic reading is concerned with what happens during the reading (23-24). Under this lens, the reader plays an important role in the meaning-making process (particularly "where" the reader is on the aesthetic/nonaesthetic spectrum or what the reader "does"; where the reader's attention is focused). The reader's relationship to the text, and the reader's continued awareness of the text, largely

contributes to an aesthetic reading experience, created by the “reader’s turning his attention toward the full lived-through fusion with the text” (47). The aesthetic reading experience, much like the picture book object, is complex, representing and fostering a transactional relationship between the reader and the text.

As essential aspect of the aesthetic transaction is the reader’s relationship to the text and the “*continu[ed] awareness of the text,*” as an object, “characterized by the reader’s turning his attention toward the full lived-through fusion with the text” (29, 44, emphasis original). This sort of awareness and connection to the material object is just what Brian Selznick had in mind when he created *Hugo Cabret*. In his 2009 Caldecott acceptance speech, he states how he “wanted readers to be aware of the object in their hands, to fall in love not just with Hugo but with the book itself, the thing with covers and pages and pictures and words” (Selznick “Caldecott Speech”). This language of love, coupled with the tangible experience of the book, speak to the desired relationship with the text, as a transactional experience wherein both the book and the reader have something to give and share in the reading experience. Under this reader response lens, meaning is derived from this exchange, and varies from person to person (and even between one person’s reading to another reading), as “each encounter between a reader and the text is a unique event” subject to the conditions of character, time, and space (Rosenblatt 35-36).

While meaning is created from the text by the reader through the reader’s personal repertoire, the text itself is not forgotten, as “emphasis on the reader’s role does not in any way minimize the importance of the text” (34). The words themselves, and by extension, the illustrations in picture books, require a “heighten[ed] awareness of the

words as signs with particular visual and auditory characteristics” (29). Nodelman, too, discusses this particular quality when discussing the inherently complex nature of pictures and picture books: “neither pictures nor the books they appear in can communicate directly and automatically. They imply a viewer with a mastery of many skills and much knowledge” (21). And while this emphasis on literary and cultural experience might seem to distance the child reader, the paradoxical quality of picture books is that they are simultaneously sophisticated *and* simple, implying a viewer that “is both very learned and very ingenuous” (21). Readers of all ages and background are able to enjoy picture books and, as is the case with all texts, they are “susceptible to being experienced at different points of the continuum [of aesthetic or nonaesthetic experiences] by different readers, or even by the same reader under different circumstances” (Rosenblatt 36). *Hugo Cabret*, then, provides a plethora of opportunities, actively encouraging continued nonaesthetic (educational) and aesthetic experiences beyond the pages of the text through the added information, sources, and web links contained in the back matter.

*The Invention of Hugo Cabret* fosters a dynamic relationship between the reader and the text by creating an interactive reading experience that engages the reader both within the pages of the text and beyond the written page. As discussed above, the additional sources and websites listed in the “credits” provide readers with the opportunity to continue exploring Hugo’s fictional and historical world. The complex relationship between image and text, wherein the illustrations replace the written narrative, encourage the reader to make meaning from the sequence of images themselves, a feature that occurs in pictures (and especially postmodern picture books),

but also exists in other visual mediums, such as comic books and graphic novels. Picture books, and therefore *Hugo Cabret*, can benefit from a critical analysis that incorporates these genres, shedding light on additional characteristics and features possibly unaccounted for by a single medium's set of conventions. Charles Hatfield and Craig Svonkin discuss this connection in their introduction to the 2012 special edition of *Children's Literature Association Quarterly*, "Why Comics Are and Are Not Picturebooks," noting how comics receive little recognition in the field and "remain an outlier in picture book studies" (430). They attribute this to the ideology typically associated with each genre, suggesting that comics, unlike picture books, are typically seen as "competing with or even obstructing" the "official literacy" prized by society (431). Together, Hatfield and Svonkin raise important questions about this distinction while pondering the benefits of studying picture books alongside comics. Hybrid texts, such as *Hugo Cabret*, but also those that deploy the comics style more overtly, such as *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part Time Indian* or even *The Diary of a Wimpy Kid* series, remind scholars of the fluidity and fusion of form taking place throughout children's literature: the borders between picture books, comics and graphic novels are porous, and the scholarship needs to adapt.

Philip Nel addresses this permeable boundary between comics and picturebooks in "Same Genus, Different Species?: Comics and Picturebooks," describing their relationship as different in *degree* rather than in *kind* (i.e. smallest amount of differentiation) (445). Nel looks closely at shared or similar components between the two mediums, such as the use of panels; illustrative words; and the passage of time, indicated by gaps between panels (primarily in comic books) or page turns. *The Invention of Hugo*

*Cabret*, while not using panels or text typically associated with comics (such as speech bubbles), does take advantage of spacing and pagination to convey time, a characteristic inherent in both comics and picture books. Likewise, repeated image sequences, such as Hugo running through the hidden passageways in the train station, mimic the sequential images associated with comics conventions. Careful analysis of these formal elements can help to distinguish comics from picture books, but in order to “experience these differences as genre distinctions” the reader and the reader’s experience must also be considered: “those literate in both picture books and comics can read in more than one genre at the same time” (Nel 451). This fluidity of genre is important because it alters the way readers approach a text (based on what preconceived ideas or attitudes they may or may not have toward comics or picture books), while, once again, reminding scholars that genre itself is pluralistic, and always evolving and changing. *Hugo Cabret* champions this hybridity, challenging readers by existing on the boundaries between different visual text genres.

In the same special issue, Nathalie op de Beeck’s article, “On Comics-Style Picture Books and Picture-Bookish Comics,” discusses the paradox inherent in the two forms, noting that despite their similarities, “strong philosophical and ideological reasons persist for their separation” (468). Like Hatfield, Svonkin, and Nodelman have suggested, picture books tend to be viewed in the light of literacy; that is, picture books typically have a didactic quality seen as supporting a larger goal of “traditional” literacy and cultural literacy. We see this in *Hugo Cabret* to a certain extent: the story is fictional, but historical, and opportunities abound for further nonaesthetic (learning) experiences, particularly in the inclusion of film stills and representations of Méliès’s original

drawings, which are quite clearly historical documents with a historical and cultural value. Op de Beeck notes, however, that despite this traditional view of picture books, the term “no longer denotes merely a pleasing tool for functional literacy, set aside once a reader matures and starts reading unillustrated print” (472). Likewise, “comics” does not necessarily denote “comic strip or a superhero comic book,” as op de Beeck contends in her thesis: “picture books are graphic narratives that operate in a medium known as *comics* (plural form), even though a picture book is not always *a comic* (singular)” (468). This distinction is important because it allows comics to be viewed as a medium with its own conventions applicable to other (non-comic book) texts (469). The word-and-picture sequences, discussed at length in Scott McCloud’s seminal comics-as-medium book, *Understanding Comics*, can be found in both comic books and picture books, and yet their use and signification can vary greatly. Like Nel’s argument, op de Beeck maintains that “picture books engage the comics medium to different degrees,” with each genre retaining particular ideologies and associations. Whatever comics association *Hugo Cabret* displays, its picture book classification, at least by the Caldecott committee, ties it “formally and materially” to childhood, which in turn shapes our expectations and attitudes toward the text (op de Beeck 473).

To complicate matters further, ideas about childhood, and of particular interest to this chapter, ideas about child readers, have been and are continuing to be challenged. The proliferation of visual media, from picture books to film, impacts how we read, understand, and interact with texts. In our digital, hypertext age, literacy has changed on both ends of the spectrum: both the reader and the text have evolved and adapted. As a hybrid text, *Hugo Cabret* both responds to and fosters a more interactive reading



experience through the complex synergy of image and text. The extended images sequences read like a scene in a silent movie as the page turns create a sense of drama and movement. Intertextual references to cinema's history and the film medium itself challenge readers by drawing on their cultural knowledge and experience to make meaning while continually pushing readers to make connections and explore beyond the written page. This type of active, engaged, and multi-layered reading is drastically and "radically" different according to Eliza T. Dresang, author of *Radical Change Theory: Books for Youth in a Digital Age* (1999) and the theory of Radical Change. In a more recent reflection of her work, "Radical Change Revisited" published in 2008, Dresang states that, "Radical Change was then and is still the only theory of which I am aware that makes this connection between printed books for youth and the digital environment" (294). Under this spatial/temporal lens, wherein authors and illustrators are impacted by their cultural moment, Radical Change accounts for the influence of digital technologies on the reading experience. The theory itself is based on "digital age principles of interactivity, connectivity, and access" that influence both *how* youth read and *what* youth read. In a similar article published the same year, "Radical Change Theory and Postmodernism, and Contemporary Picturebooks," Dresang discusses how Radical Change and postmodernism can be applied to children's literature and contemporary picture books (41). She identifies books such as *Black and White*, *Don't Let the Pigeon Drive the Bus!* and *The Stinky Cheese Man and Other Fairly Stupid Tales* as exemplary texts of Radical Change for the way they play with narrative and picture book conventions, directly addressing the reader and breaking away from a linear model. The design elements, fragmentation, and multiple interpretations and modes of expression

reflect some of the digital age characteristics of hypertext connectivity and user/reader interactivity.

*Hugo Cabret*'s hybrid status and interactive format makes it a perfect candidate for Radical Change Theory. In fact, Dresang and Bowie Kotrla's 2009 article, "Radical Change Theory and Synergistic Reading for Digital Age Youth," begins with a brief discussion of Brian Selznick's text: "[*Hugo Cabret*] provides a dramatic departure from the typical picture-book tradition and joins a number of other radically changed books that have special appeal for digital age youth" (93). Dresang and Kotrla use the term 'digital age youth' in recognition of digital age environment "in which youth have been immersed from preschool through adulthood" (94). Radical Change Theory is therefore significant because it simultaneously recognizes the changes in books and readers, intrinsically and environmentally, while remaining connected to "traditional characteristics of literature for youth and youth reading behavior" (95). The theory, much like the "radical" books themselves, recognize the reader's active participation in the meaning-making process. Building from Rosenblatt's Transactional Theory of Reader Response, Dresang and Kotrla refer to Radical Change as a "digital age synergistic aesthetic reading" experience wherein "something new is created out of the interactive process between reader and text" (96). In *Hugo Cabret*, the illusion of movement is created both through the reader's physical engagement with the text as a pseudo-flip-book, and through the mental processes that connect sequential images to movement. Additionally, the reader must work to synthesize multiple modes of communication: illustration, narrative, photographs, cinema, and comics.

This synergetic experience reflects not only changing mediums, but also changing attitudes toward children. As several scholars acknowledge, children's literature is mediated entirely through adults: adults write the books for other adults to buy and read or gift to their children; the *actual* child is largely absent from this process. Recent ideologies of childhood, however, have impacted how adults perceive the child (and therefore create texts for children), such as Henry Jenkins's view of the child as participatory and active: desiring, seeking, and making connection. Dresang's Radical Change Theory likewise acknowledges this phenomenon, recognizing the changes in books as proof of changing attitudes toward children, suggesting that, "in some cases adults and children have become partners in the digital environment, sharing knowledge and skills" (101). By identifying digital age characteristics (interactivity, connectivity, and access) in both the behavior of children *and* in the texts themselves, Dresang contends that both the reader and the text have changed and adapted to a new digital environment (101-102). Texts such as *Hugo Cabret* represent this change by incorporating digital age characteristics into the book (or "handheld," as Dresang calls it) form in order to engage the reader and respond to the desire for interactivity and connectivity.

"Radical" texts, then, acknowledge the synergy between words and pictures as a form of digital age interaction that "contributes to a heightened reading experience" by encouraging reader interaction and active participation in the meaning making process (Dresang "Synergetic Reading" 99). *Hugo Cabret* represents a synergy between images and narrative, form and content, and melds genres to create something new. As Brian Selznick discusses in his Caldecott Medal acceptance speech, he selected the picture

book format as a medium to convey a story “about the history of cinema,” using illustrations and page turns to recreate the sense of movement inherent in cinema. Selznick incorporates “the language of cinema” in his work in a variety of ways, from the cover design to the end papers, but perhaps most notably in the illustrations themselves to create a cinematic reading experience.

The “Brief Introduction” to *Hugo Cabret* prepares readers for this multimodal experience, appearing as if displayed on a title screen before the start of a silent film:

I want you to picture yourself sitting in the darkness, like the beginning of a movie. On screen, the sun will soon rise, and you will find yourself zooming toward a train station in the middle of the city. You will rush through the doors into a crowded lobby. You will eventually spot a boy amid the crowd, and he will start to move through the train station. Follow him, because this is Hugo Cabret.

His head is full secrets, and he’s waiting for his story to begin. (7)

This brief passage is significant because it directly addresses the reader (“I want you to picture yourself”) and places her in a specific time, place, and attitude. As mentioned earlier in the discussion of picture books and comics, different mediums have different ideologies and expectations associated with their genre, so asking the reader to conjure this particular experience is likely to shape her approach to the text. Suddenly, the black pages evoke something more than the absence of color, they evoke the absence of light, and the dark stillness before a film begins. As chapter one begins, the image of a moon starts out small in the center of the page, but with each page turn, the image grows steadily larger, and the perspective within the image changes, first zooming out from the moon and over a Parisian landscape, then “zooming toward a train station in the middle

of the city.” In the opening sequence, we follow, with each successive page turn, a boy making his way through a train station and into the hidden walls that lead him to a space behind a clock face overlooking a toy shop. In these wordless 42 pages, the reader is pulled into Hugo’s world, and the language of cinema is used to convey information: establishing shots, medium shots, close ups, and extreme close ups direct the reader’s eye and create movement through the step-by-step sequencing (for example, in three sequential two-page spreads there is a medium shot of the man behind the toy booth; a close up of the man’s face; and then an extreme close up of the man’s eye). In order to process this information, readers’ synthesize several different modes at once, drawing on readerly experiences with picture books and narrative texts in combination with spectatorship experiences with film.

As the story progresses, sections of text-based narrative are interspersed between illustrations and image sequences. The narrative moments are longer than intertitles typically used in silent cinema, but the structure clearly replicates the way wordless cinema uses images and text to tell a story. This integration of styles is characteristic of hybrid texts, but is also an act of remediation. Published in 1999, Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin’s text, *Remediation: Understanding New Media*, remains relevant and is a particularly useful concept for understanding how new media forms created in our digital environment actively engage with materials and forms of the past. According to Bolter and Grusin, “the word remediation is used by educators as a euphemism for the task of bringing lagging students up to an expected level of performance” and therefore clarify that they “have adopted the word to express the way in which one medium is seen by our culture as reforming or improving upon another” (59). This is not to say that the

newer form is “better,” but rather that it incorporates older forms in the construction of something new. *Hugo Cabret*, a challenging new text that arises, as Dresang notes, from our digital age, draws on prior media forms, such as picture books, photography, and of particular importance to the narrative, cinema. Through the process of remediation, media continually (re)presents itself in new and changing forms; as such, “the goal of remediation is to refashion or rehabilitate other media” by remaking, responding, or otherwise interacting with its predecessors” (56). The interconnectedness and self-reflexivity of new and old media makes readers hyper-aware of the medium itself.

Within Hugo’s story, the early films of French magician and filmmaker Georges Méliès are rediscovered and rehabilitated. The story ends with Hugo and his adopted family (the Mélièses) attending a special ceremony at the French Film Academy “celebrating the life and work of cinema legend Georges Méliès” after the successful restoration of these once-forgotten films (Selznick 493). Hugo’s tale is of course fictitious, but through Selznick’s novel, Méliès’s films *are* rehabilitated and refashioned for a new audience. Selznick’s hybrid style not only incorporates cinematic image sequences and visual filmic language, but also includes recreated sketches of Méliès’s drawings and actual photographs and film stills from the movies referenced in the book. The use of actual stills from *A Train Arrives in the Station* (1895), *A Trip to the Moon* (1902), and photographs of the “actual” historical person George Méliès represent moments of hypermediacy, a key component of remediation. According to Bolter and Grusin:

If the logic of immediacy leads one either to erase or to render automatic the act of representation, the logic of hypermediacy acknowledges multiple acts of

representation and makes them visible. Where immediacy suggests a unified visual space, contemporary hypermediacy offers a heterogeneous space, in which representation is conceived of not as a window on to the world, but rather as "windowed" itself—with windows that open on to other representations or other media (67).

In other words, hypermediacy makes us aware of the medium itself. In *Hugo Cabret*, the juxtaposition of illustration and celluloid images draws attention to each medium's formal qualities: readers recognize the sudden diegetic break from pencil illustration to photograph and therefore are forced to recognize how the forms are reworked and re-presented, while creating a sense of authenticity for the reader. In one scene of the narrative, Hugo is reading a book called *The Invention of Dreams: The Story of the First Movies Ever Made*. After reading a description of *A Train Arrives in the Station* (which both Hugo and the reader read), the reader turns the page to see an actual still from the movie. This moment of hypermediacy actively remediates and rehabilitates an image from cinema's history. Selznick's pencil illustrations also act as a form of remediation in the way they replicate the look and grainy feel of early black and white cinema. The images have texture and are softer, mimicking the image capture of early cameras, and play on the contrast of light and shadow, scale and sequencing, much like a film's storyboard. All of these layers work together to (re)introduce the reader to the magic of the moving image, engaging the spectator through intertextuality and creating an interactive reading experience that draws on a complex narrative and visual history.

In addition to the rehabilitation of early cinema, *The Invention of Hugo Cabret* works to reestablish the importance of books and the printed form in our digital age.

Throughout the narrative, books and notebooks propel the story forward and do the cultural and rehabilitative work that films cannot do: many of George Méliès's films, for example, are melted down and destroyed, yet books remain to record the man that cinema had forgotten. In selecting the illustrated book format, Selznick persuasively reasserts the significance of printed material in an increasingly digital world. Likewise, the complex integration of image and text foregrounds the importance of literacy and suggests that books, not films, provide readers with the skills they need to navigate an increasingly visual culture.

As an object, the book works to remediate *itself*, as new form, with its innovative and genre-defying use of illustrations and narrative. By challenging the novel format, and by blurring the boundaries between picture books, graphic novels, comic books, and other illustrated texts, *The Invention of Hugo Cabret* draws attention to itself as an aesthetic object, encouraging readers to closely examine the book itself through the tactile reading experience. Presenting two-dimensional images in a tangible three-dimensional form reconnects readers to handheld visual literacy and reading experiences in a digital, screen-based world. In so doing, *Hugo Cabret* remediates not only the images of early cinema within the narrative, but also remediates the picture book form itself through the melding of image and text, old and new, to (re)introduce readers to the magic of moving image through the thrill of the page turn.



## Chapter Two: Adaptation as Remediation: Martin Scorsese's *Hugo*

Martin Scorsese remediates Brian Selznick's hybrid text, *The Invention of Hugo Cabret*, in his feature film, *Hugo* (2011), producing an adaptation that is both inspired by yet different from the source text. Adaptations, of course, are not a new phenomenon, and several different forms of adaptation exist and have existed. The scholarly debate surrounding Adaptation Studies is complex, with familiar arguments about narrative fidelity (how committed to the source does the adaptation have to be? does it matter?), and perhaps surprising discussions about whether Adaptations are a genre onto themselves (Rick Altman would say "no", Robert Stam would argue "yes"). These discussions are necessary, as James Naremore suggests in *Film Adaptation*, to move the study of adaptation "from the margins" of contemporary media studies, by means of "the study of recycling, remaking, and every other form of retelling in the age of mechanical reproduction" (Naremore 15). With this framework in mind, this chapter examines the *Hugo* adaptation as an act of remediation that reworks or refashions Selznick's pioneering illustrated text into a work of art that speaks to and is made possible by our digital culture and technology. Crucial to this examination is a return to Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin's text, *Remediation: Understanding New Media* (1999), whose core theories of remediation, immediacy, and hypermediacy remain insightful despite our rapidly-changing media environment. Under this lens, we can also see how Scorsese adapts and remediates early cinema, creating a dynamic intertextual experience concomitant of our digital age.

Martin Scorsese's 2011 feature film adaptation, *Hugo*, captured the attention of audiences and critics alike, earning eleven Oscar nominations, and taking home five

awards, including Best Cinematography and Best Achievement in Visual Effects. *Hugo*'s technological and aesthetic footprint is impressive, incorporating cutting-edge digital 3D technology and visual effects, elaborate set designs, and multi-scale miniatures in the creation of *Hugo*'s cinematic world. In producing this adaptation, Scorsese and his team worked closely with Selznick's text, not only working to bring the images to life, but expanding the visual narrative into a multifaceted and multidimensional celebration of media that includes the remediation of early cinema, in addition to literature, illustrations, and theatrical art forms. Through this process of remediation, *Hugo* engages the spectator through intertextuality, immediacy, and hypermediacy, creating a dynamic viewing experience that challenges our preconceived notions of spectatorship and adaptations.

The problem of audience, however, is worth considering because, as many scholars have attested, in order for film genres to work they must be accepted by the masses. In addition, audiences must also accept a given adaptation as an *adaptation*, which is where all the mess of definition comes into play. For the purposes of this paper, I am working under the assumption that *Hugo* is an adaptation both in terms of production and consumption: Scorsese worked closely with the source text and audiences accept and even participate in this connection. In Ed Vulliamy's article for *The Observer*, "Brian Selznick: how Scorsese's *Hugo* drew inspiration from his magical book" (2012), he quotes Selznick's observations of the adaptation in progress: "When I [Selznick] went on set, everybody had a copy of the book. Scorsese always kept a few on hand, so he could give them to people so they'd understand what he wanted in the shot." Vulliamy goes on to relay how "Selznick was told by Date Ferretti, the production designer: 'I just did everything you drew'." This intertextuality supports the mode of adaptation on the

production end, and the fidelity to the source text invites readers (consumers) to accept it as such.

The opening sequence of the film aligns nearly shot-for-shot with the illustrations at the beginning of *The Invention of Hugo Cabret*, as the camera sweeps over Paris to find Hugo peering out from behind the clock's face. In both the film and the text, the viewer gains a lot of information visually about the setting, a train station, and about the major characters. The text creates a mystery for the reader by showing close up images of objects, people, and out-of-the-way places: an empty hallway, a decorated vent grate, a man's eye, a sketch in a notebook. This technique is picked up in the film as the incredibly mobile camera moves in and out, sweeping over the Parisian landscape and into—and through—the train station. An incredibly mobile camera captures and creates little vignettes of people interacting, thereby extending the scope of the original text and introducing us to new characters. Sacha Baron Cohen fleshes out the role of the antagonistic station inspector, acting as a more direct foil to Hugo than the novel depicts. In addition, we also meet several merchants and people brought together by the train station whose stories are captured in vignettes reminiscent of early cinema's silent one-reel shows.

Much like the book, the film relies heavily on images, rather than words, to tell the story. But perhaps the most dynamic element the film introduces is its play with sound and silence. *Hugo* (awarded Best Sound Design), tells as much of the story through sound—sound, and not dialogue—as it does with camerawork. Before the start of the film, train whistles and ticking clocks fill the space between the titles and the images. Music fills the air and propels the film where pagination and spacing worked in the text

to drive the action forward. Footsteps, ticking clocks, steam whistles, and bells; all are additions made possible by the film medium that expand Hugo's world.

Scorsese's adaptation aligns closely with the original text, and part of the participatory experience of this adaptation is watching how the images from *Hugo Cabret* are translated to the silver screen. The excitement, the adventure, the drama of the page turn, all are transcribed in familiar *and* original ways, thereby upholding the integrity of *The Invention of Hugo Cabret* while creating something new, suggesting the auteur need not be lost in adaptations. In pouring over several film reviews, Scorsese is praised time and time again for his virtuosic use of 3D technology that pushes the bounds of the cinema landscape. In a 2011 interview with *The Hollywood Reporter*, James Cameron celebrates *Hugo* as "absolutely the best 3D photography that [he's] seen," and he should know. Cameron's own visually groundbreaking epic *Avatar* (2009) is but one example of how he has championed film's embrace of new technology. *The New York Times* 2011 review of *Hugo* additionally praises "Mr. Scorsese's fidelity to Mr. Selznick's original story," also noting that *Hugo* is "emphatically his [Scorsese's own] work."

Scorsese's first foray into 3D technology takes viewers into the heart of a 1930s Paris train station, where the young orphan Hugo lives and works behind the walls taking care of the clocks and tinkering with an automaton left to him by his late father. Much of the film's mystery begins and ends with this mechanical man, as Hugo's quest to uncover the meanings and mechanics of this wind-up toy lead him to the discovery and recovery of cinema's first magician and filmmaker, Georges Méliès. On the surface, the film tells the story of Hugo's efforts to rebuild the automaton as a way to reconnect with his father, but within this quest lies the resurrection of films and spectacle from the birth of cinema,

in the era of Edison, the Lumiere Brothers, and Georges Méliès.

The film's official synopsis foregrounds Hugo's personal and ultimately familial quest: "[Hugo] unlocks a mystery and embarks on a quest that will transform those around him and lead to safe and loving place he can call home," with the automaton working to both propel the narrative and unite the otherwise disparate characters. Hugo's quest, however, moves beyond the familial realm and into a much broader cultural world as he discovers motion pictures through the help of his friend, Isabelle, Papa Georges's (Georges Méliès) goddaughter. However, Papa Georges's identity as a filmmaker is unknown to nearly everyone, save Mama Jeanne (Isabelle's godmother) who faithfully keeps his secret. Papa Georges, having to disband his film business and destroy his films (the films are melted down and repurposed as heels for women's shoes), runs a toy shop in the train station and initially appears as a foil to Hugo. Ultimately, Hugo and Isabelle discover the connections between the automaton's drawing (a sketch of the now-famous shot of the rocket hitting the moon's face from *A Trip to the Moon*), the early films of Georges Méliès, and the realization that Papa Georges and Mama Jeanne were once extraordinary filmmakers, actors, producers, and magicians.

Several critics applaud Scorsese's *Hugo* for introducing Méliès's films to new generations of viewers. Kristin Thompson's post for David Bordwell's blog ([davidbordwell.net/blog](http://davidbordwell.net/blog)), "HUGO: Scorsese's birthday present to Georges Méliès"; Susan King's article for the L.A. Times, "'Hugo' revives interest in Georges Méliès" (2011); and Adam Cook's article in *cinemezzo*, "For the Love of Movies: Martin Scorsese's Hugo," all focus their attention, as the titles suggest, on Scorsese's role in rehabilitating Méliès's films. Many call *Hugo* a "love letter to cinema," and connect the

film to Scorsese's own interest in cinematic history. Indeed, *Hugo*'s stunning mastery of new media technology, when put in dialogue with original clips of Méliès's *A Trip to the Moon* (1902), makes for a compelling and sentimental journey through more than a century's worth of magic in cinema.

In Adam Cook's discussion of *Hugo*, he notes that "Scorsese wants to reintroduce these works into public consciousness . . . to reinforce their integrality." This sentiment so neatly recapitulates one of the driving forces behind remediation as "technologies of representation proceed by reforming or remediating earlier ones" (Bolter 61) while older forms seek ways of making themselves anew. By incorporating early celluloid scenes, Scorsese acts on behalf of the medium to assert itself as relevant.

A point of departure from these otherwise glowing sentiments occurs as Cook reaches his conclusion. In reference to Scorsese's cinematic tendencies, which include films such as *Cape Fear* (1991) and *The Departed* (2006), Cook tells his readers: "that *Hugo* is a family film should not be a deterring factor." While this can be contextually understood in terms of Scorsese's career, this sentiment greatly underestimates the richness and complexities of children's texts as a whole. And, like Kristen's piece in the Bordwell Blog, there is a peculiar absence of any mention of Selznick or *Hugo Cabret*. Instead, Cook continues in praise of Scorsese's clever integration of Méliès's story in *Hugo* that "further solidifies the significance of the relationship between history, fiction, creator, and viewer." This praise undoubtedly is justified by the careful attention to detail in the film, but a major part of that attention also lies with Scorsese's fidelity to Selznick's *Hugo Cabret*. It is Selznick who brings readers into Méliès's magical world—Selznick and his *children's* book.

Which leads us to another important consideration: What does it mean to have a children's text remediate cinema's history? Both *Hugo Cabret* and *Hugo* are designated as children's media—though some have challenged whether or not *Hugo* can sustain a child's interest (another assumption that reveals society's (mis)conceptions of childhood, a topic in and of itself)—and both forms do substantial cultural work. That Selznick's illustrious text remediates George Méliès's early cinematic masterpieces is evident in the inclusion of Méliès's drawings, images, and sketches, whether in their original form, or, as Selznick himself indicates, directly inspired by the works of George Méliès (Selznick 532). The very form of the book also works to rehabilitate and revere the magic of the early cinematic experience and the dynamic of the moving image. In picture books, the drama of the page turn enhances suspense and creates a sense of movement. By employing a variety of stylistic and editorial techniques, otherwise 'still' texts drive the reader forward. This too is the case with *The Invention of Hugo Cabret*, although I would like to suggest that Selznick also consciously draws inspiration from the very works *Hugo*, in the narrative, seeks to rehabilitate.

But it is not just celluloid that is being reimagined and revived here; *Hugo* weaves a complex mediated web wherein stage plays, magic acts, illustrations, books, and film are recreated, revisioned, and revived for new audiences in new ways. In utilizing the latest technology to rework older forms of media, *Hugo* showcases the complex interaction and intertextuality inherent in remediation. Technology plays a crucial role both in the creation of fantastical yet realistic cinematic immersion and in the resurrection and recreation of select scenes from silent cinema. For *Hugo*, early cinema is reconstructed and re-presented through digital 3D technology that seeks to give depth and

atmosphere to this particular cinematic landscape while additionally incorporating “original” footage and scenes from cinema’s infancy.

In the adaptation, Scorsese takes this idea to its apex by including actual clips from early cinema. This may seem like an obvious move, transitioning from the mixture of original and recreated *still* images to original and recreated *moving* images, but it rarely feels this organic. It is almost as if the text anticipates the film through the inclusion of Méliès’ work. The beauty of these moments exists not only in the resurrection of early cinema’s masterpieces, but also in the translation of Selznick’s text, which is itself remediated in a new form. With all these layers at work, the spectator can’t help but be moved to participate in this multimodal, multidimensional (quite literally, in terms of the film’s use of 3D) experience.

New media and old media forms combine and interact throughout *Hugo*’s narrative: modern 3D filmmaking mixes with early black-and-white scenes from cinema’s silent era. Under the lens of remediation, Bolter and Grusin refer to this type of media melding as an:

oscillat[ion] between immediacy and hypermediacy, between transparency and opacity. This oscillation is the key to understanding how a medium refashions its predecessors and other contemporary media. Although each medium promises to reform its predecessors by offering a more immediate or authentic experience, the promise of reform inevitably leads us to become aware of the new medium as a medium. Thus, immediacy leads to hypermediacy. (20)

That is to say that the desire for photorealism, then, employs particular strategies and techniques so as to achieve a sense of immediacy, or presence. Bolter and Grusin identify



the ways in which painting, photography, film, and television have used linear perspective, erasure, and automaticity (automated linear perspective) to appear more “real,” thereby making the form seemingly transparent (24). And yet, as a culture, this doesn’t seem to be enough. At the time of Bolter and Grusin’s writing, digital graphics were (and still are) pushing the bounds of immediacy by adapting the aforementioned strategies in the creation of virtual reality. We see this same desire and inherent contradiction of immediacy and reality in *Hugo*, wherein 3D technology is used to create realistic depth and atmosphere, moving the film space from its diegetic plane into the space of the audience. Simultaneously, through the representation of select films, such as *The Arrival of a Train*, audiences become aware (or hyperaware) of the film medium itself, as the vibrant world of Hugo Cabret is replaced by the flat, grainy, black and white film image. Here the audience is reminded of mediums themselves through the juxtaposition of early celluloid and modern digital cinema, causing viewers to become aware (or hyperaware) of the aesthetic object through the tension created by the remediation process.

Another obvious tension created by the use of 3D specifically occurs in the theatrical experience of watching the film. Traditionally, film works or creates a sense of movement through persistence of vision. The images on screen appear to move despite their ultimate stillness through an ocular illusion where viewers are no longer able to distinguish individual still frames. This persistence of vision then allows viewer to perceive motion on screen and see the images as moving. Now we’ve certainly come a long way from the early photoplays that celebrated this phenomenon, but our desire for that immediacy has grown and influenced the technology used to showcase this

experience. Technological advancements aside, another key factor audiences bring to the theatre is the suspension of disbelief, wherein viewers willfully accept the images on screen as “real” for the purpose of entertainment. These two activities, persistence of vision and suspension of disbelief, represent some of the viewer’s contribution to the creation or experience of immediacy, and it is perhaps easy to identify where the illusion of reality on screen would be undermined by the conventions of cinema spectatorship—the feel of the seat, the sound of a cough or a whisper, the dim light of an exit, the flatness of the screen—which again remind the viewer of the medium itself.

In *Remediation*, Bolter and Grusin emphasize the connections between media and technology but direct us away from technological determinism: “New digital media are not external agents that come to disrupt an unsuspecting culture. They emerge from within cultural contexts, and they refashion other media, which are embedded in the same or similar contexts” (20). By viewing new media technologies as a more complex network consisting of multiple movers that arise *within* rather than *apart from* cultural contexts, we can begin to see how our viewing experience is shaped by similar situations.

#### Adapting *The Invention of Hugo Cabret*

Brian Selznick describes his process of watching “clocks and train stations, complicated automatons . . . some old-fashioned magic, and a legendary film director or two” come to life in his companion book to the film, *The Hugo Movie Companion: A Behind the Scenes Look at How a Beloved Book Became a Major Motion Picture* (7). “All of this and more was inspired by my book, *The Invention of Hugo Cabret*, where Méliès, speaking of that glass studio, says, ‘If you’ve ever wondered where your dreams come from when you go to sleep at night, just look around. This is where they are made’”

(7). Part of what makes this particular adaptation such a rich and compelling remediation of various media is the substantial and dynamic work the source text does through the history and images Selznick (re)creates. In the film companion, Selznick writes about his experience of inventing Hugo Cabret, which begins with Georges Méliès' *A Trip to the Moon*. While working on his book, he submersed himself in classic French cinema of the 1920s and 1930s, ultimately deciding to mimic the experience by replacing text with illustrations: “*like a movie . . . replacing words with illustrated sequences so we could watch those parts of the story*” (13, emphasis original). Typically scholars and consumers of adapted works tend to think of the adaptation process as one-dimensional and linear, from source text to adapted work. Here, however, by adapting bits and pieces of cinema and cinematic form, Brian Selznick demonstrates, as other artists have also shown, that the process of adaptation is multidimensional and much more complex.

For many scholars, the study of adaptation is tied closely with its own classification struggles and hybrid status as something between literary criticism and film studies. Within the last fifty years, adaptation has gained steady attention and publication, but the problem of prejudice still remains. As Imelda Whelehan points out in *Adaptations: From Text to Screen, Screen to Text*, the chief problem lies in the “conscious and unconscious” notions viewers, readers, and scholars bring to the study and discussion of adapted works (3). She proposes a cultural studies approach that “foregrounds the activities of reception and consumption” that would shelve “considerations of the aesthetic of cultural worthiness of the object of study” (18). Opening up the field in this way not only removes the politics of new critical evaluation—is the adaptation *worthy enough* or aesthetically relevant—but makes room

for readers and mass-media fans and, significantly, the recognition of the work they do as active participants and viewers.

By proposing adaptation as a production model congruent with the activity of fandom I mean to disavow the notion of a passive spectator. In our digital age, media spectatorship has changed, and I am greatly indebted to Henry Jenkins's work on participatory culture in my own understanding of interaction and production in regards to adaptation. *Hugo* is a special case in that it simultaneously remediates and participates in adaptation on several levels: refashioning early cinema, narrative, and illustrated texts while allowing viewers to actively engage through intertextuality. But before we delve into spectatorship, we must first consider what adaptation is, does, and invites readers to do.

In this discussion of adaptation, I deviate slightly from the impetus proposed by Thomas Leitch in his article, "Adaptation, the Genre" which views adaptation as "a genre with its own rules, procedures, and textual markers" (106). This understanding supports active spectatorship but also asks readers to forge new ground. As Leitch points out, Rick Altman's authoritative *Film/Genre* identifies eighty-five different genres, but 'adaptation' is not among the otherwise extensive industry-defined and mass-accepted list (106). On the problem of definition, Leitch refers to Linda Hutcheon's consideration of adaptation as a genre that "involves, for its knowing audience, a conceptual flipping back and forth between the work we know and the work we are experiencing" (108). This flipping back necessitates an active participation on behalf of the spectator, one that engages the viewer's prior experiences as well as expectations. No longer passive, the viewer, consciously or subconsciously, actively participates in the meaning-making process

through comparison and evaluation. This sort of intertextuality requires a familiarity with the source material—in our case, the illustrated text—and a willingness, as Leitch also notes, to acknowledge the film as an adaptation (108).

In Linda Hutcheon's *A Theory of Adaptation*, she likewise argues there is a certain pleasure in adaptation that arises from “reception with variation, from the comfort of ritual combined with piquancy of surprise” and argues for the treatment of adaptations *as adaptations* (4). In carving out her definition she wishes, as I do, to make a move away from fidelity assessments, and toward a broader approach that recognizes the aesthetic object as an intertextual process. It is here where I find remediation a useful concept or lens through which adaptation can be viewed in addition to the key identifiers as outlined by Hutcheon:

- An acknowledged transposition of a recognizable other work or works
- A creative *and* an interpretive act of appropriation/salvaging
- An extended intertextual engagement with the adapted work. (8)

Under these conditions, adaptation can exist as its own thing: “a derivation that is not derivative—a work that is second without being secondary” (9). Hutcheon's “double vision” approach toward defining adaptation is useful because it considers both product and process, acknowledging the acts of creation and reception. My own understanding of adaptation as an intertextual process of repurposing, reimagining, and ultimately remediating, relies on this same dualistic approach, wherein the author or auteur of the adaptation anticipates a more active spectator.

Hutcheon goes on to explain how adaptations across media platforms can be considered as a form of remediation, or more specifically, re-mediation:

In many cases, because adaptations are to a different medium, they are re-mediations, that is, specifically translations in the form of intersemiotic transpositions from one sign system (for example, words) to another (for example, images). This is translation but in a very specific sense: a transmutation or transcoding, that is, as necessarily a recoding into a new set of conventions as well as signs. (16)

Here remediation is considered literally as the re-mediating of one medium into another medium, with specific and significant implications for how one form of media is translated into a new or different genre with a different set of conventions and codes. The semiotic language of one text must also be adapted and changed to meet the needs of the new medium. Cinematic tradition largely adapts written texts into visual forms, creating scenes and images from words. Illustrated texts, graphic novels, and picture books, already largely visual mediums, may require a different adaptation process, and challenge standard translations from words to pictures. *The Invention of Hugo Cabret* and *Hugo* likewise conflate a linear adaptation model: *Hugo Cabret* appears to “work backwards,” adapting moving images into still images, remediating cinema, while *Hugo* adapts *Hugo Cabret*, simultaneously remediating a graphic novel *and* cinema, thereby translating multiple layers of sign systems in the creation of a “new” medium. Likewise, *Hugo Cabret* and *Hugo* remediate through immediacy and hypermediacy, simultaneously seeking to envelope the reader or viewer in the text itself by “erasing” the traces of the medium itself (especially in *Hugo*’s use of 3D) while drawing attention to the different mediums themselves, making readers and viewers hyperaware of the contributing sign systems. This use of remediation is particularly effective in foregrounding the historical

and present-day advances in technology and filmmaking featured in both the film and the book.

*Hugo* exists in the midst of another technological and cinematic revolution as the industry makes the shift to digital: digital capture, digital project, digital effects, digital 3D. As with most innovations and movements, the 3D phenomenon, among other changes (digital projection), is not without resistance and outright dismissal. In Thomas Elsaesser's article, "The 'Return' of 3-D: On Some of the Logics and Genealogies of the Image in Twenty-First Century," he discusses the film industry's recent "launch of digital 3-D cinema as a new attraction," marking the 2009-2010 film seasons as the "return of 3-D" with films such as James Cameron's *Avatar* (2009), Tim Burton's *Alice in Wonderland* (2009), and Steven Spielberg and Peter Jackson's *The Adventures of Tintin* (2011) representing some of the major directors, auteurs, and studios' endorsements that were met with some level of aesthetic and/or financial success (218). But despite these rallying points, he notes how general consensus views the move as a passing fad or gimmick to attract attention in the midst of today's growing web culture and piracy threats, similar to the wave of 3D films released in the 1950s to combat the rise of television. As a business endeavor, he views D3D as nonsensical; as an aesthetic innovation, the cinematic possibilities for narrative expansion and affective spectatorship open up. The aesthetic endeavor is largely what interests me, with *Hugo* as the model for the integration of form and narrative and the evolution of spectatorship.

In an interview with Scorsese, he explains part of the impetus for filming in 3D: "It sounds like a cliché, but the idea is that you're *in* the world with them . . . When you start telling stories, you want sound, color, a big screen, so to speak, and depth. People

have always wanted that, and so for me this was a great opportunity” (“In *Hugo*, Scorsese Salutes a Movie Magician” NPR (2011)). What Scorsese acknowledges—like so many filmmakers, theorists, and spectators—is the desire for realism; the goal of removing any trace of the apparatus. The general trajectory of photography and film demonstrates this drive for a more realistic presentation and experience: still images to moving images, silent to sound, black and white to color, flat to 3D, to create, as Scorsese says, the feeling of being *in* the cinematic world.

This endeavor, however, rests on a series of assumptions about film, realism, and 3D, all of which need some clarification. To begin with, film history is not as linear as the above general trajectory assumes. Instead, we see a variety of things happening at a variety of times: new innovations are attempted, experimented with, forgotten, rediscovered, dismissed, and attempted again. A ready example of this is in the history of 3D filmmaking, whose history begins with the Lumiere brothers in 1902 (Elsaesser 225). Experimentation with the form and technology have pushed cinema’s bounds and challenged the way filmmakers create and depict their stories and images; borrowing and adapting from a variety of media and techniques. Likewise, in *Hugo*, we see glimpses of this in Méliès’s hand-tinted images to create “color” movies well before the advent of color film. Therefore, it is necessary to note that despite film’s apparent linear evolution, its history is much more convoluted and dynamic than the reductionist lens often used for the sake of clarity.

In addition, realism is much more complex than is presented here. For the purposes of this discussion, realism pertains much more to the visual experience than to any narrative or thematic concerns; that is to say, the drive for realism behind *Hugo* is not



so much as capturing reality as it is creating the feeling that Hugo's world is real, and that as a spectator, you are part of it. This does not exclude the efforts to capture life as it is or the film movements and theories of realism: Andrew Bazin's "myth of total cinema," Rudolf Arnheim's "complete film," and the efforts of cinema verite (or cinema of the Real), for example, have all contributed to the erasure of the apparatus as a means to enhance realism or reveal a cinematic truth.

This quest for immediacy or hypermediacy emphasized by remediation reflects a desire for the experience of realism. This, of course, is very complex debate that has since evolved as cinematic "reality" has been redefined and challenged with the advent of new technology and digital special effects. It can be unproductive and even contradictory to think of a digital landscape or animated element as "real," and yet so much energy goes into the construction and depiction of reality, even if that reality doesn't physically or tangibly exist. This is perhaps most prevalent in science fiction and fantasy films, where imagined worlds are created that have no ties to "reality," and yet "realism" is achieved through artificial detail, perspective, and the inclusion of "imperfections": glare, grain, lens flares, or lens distortions, for example. In *Hugo*, Scorsese recreates the reality of a 1930s train station through mise-en-scene (the selection and arrangement of objects onscreen) and his carefully crafted atmospheric 3D, which brings the depot to life through the creation of ash and dust and billows of smoke and steam. In recreating Hugo's reality, the physical environment (the train station, the toy shop, the people) and cultural environment (the music, the advertisements, the films Hugo watches) are remediated, simultaneously creating immediacy (Hugo's world *feels* real) and hypermediacy (we become aware of the film medium itself, especially in the scenes of

Méliès's production studio and the showing of black and white films).

There is a caveat, however, in the way I am presenting remediation. As Bolter and Grusin indicate, “the word *remediation* is used by educators as a euphemism for the task of bringing lagging students up to an expected level of performance” and therefore clarify that they “have adopted the word to express the way in which one medium is seen by our culture as reforming or improving upon another” (59). Just as is the case and complication of adaptation, there is an inherent sense of improvement in the act of remediation. In viewing adaptation as a form of remediation, I wish to make it clear that I am steering us away from interpretations based on amelioration and toward a more interdisciplinary approach that eschews value judgments in favor of intertextual discourse. Therefore, I am not arguing that *Hugo Cabret* is an improvement of Méliès, or that *Hugo* is an improvement of Selznick's novel. What I am suggesting, however, is that Selznick's work actively participates in an act of remediation that (re)introduces readers to the magic of the (moving) image. *Hugo*, through its breadth of cinematic language, adapts Selznick's novel into a multilayered expression that simultaneously refashions *Hugo Cabret* and resurrects treasured glimpses of film history. At each stage, the remediation process engages the spectator (or reader) through intertextuality, thereby creating a dynamic experience that draws on both a textual and visual history inherent in adaptation.

### Chapter Three: Click Here to Enter:

#### Intertextuality, Convergence, and Hugo Cabret's Website

This chapter looks at the official website for *The Invention of Hugo Cabret*, [www.theinventionofhugocabret.com](http://www.theinventionofhugocabret.com), as well as the surrounding paratexts suggested by Brian Selznick. Under the lens of remediation, intertextuality, and convergence culture, this chapter discusses how *The Invention of Hugo Cabret* encourages participation in multimodal communities through an examination of digital paratexts and websites. For the sake of clarity, Brian Selznick's official website will be referred to as the Hugo Website and cited as "Hugo Website" where applicable.

Throughout this discussion, I have discussed the seemingly disparate events—Hugo, automatons, picture books and different mediums—under the lens of remediation and radical change theory, but it would be remiss not to circle back toward the beginning of Media and Cultural Studies. As scholars, media users and enthusiasts, we simultaneously live in, and in the wake of, new media studies, harkening back to Marshall McLuhan's groundbreaking text *Understanding Media* (1964) and the proclamation that "the medium is the message" on through and beyond Henry Jenkins's now canonical understanding of "convergence culture." The former favors form over content as "it is the medium that shapes and controls the scale and form of human association and action"; or, to put it another way, the "message" of the medium is its influence on human activities and affairs (1). This humanistic view of media has stayed with us, however ironically, as we move into a more-mediated, post-human, cyborg world. As we continue to question and push the boundaries of humanity and question the impacts of our technologies, McLuhan Media becomes (or remains) relevant, especially in the consideration of technology as extensions of ourselves. Indeed, the posthuman

figures into both *The Invention of Hugo Cabret* and *Hugo* in the automaton and Hugo's dream sequence, respectively, wherein the mechanical seems human and works as a medium to remediate other media: the automaton's drawing reproduces an image from *A Trip to the Moon* (1902), thereby remediating, ala Bolter and Grusin, and exemplifying McLuhan's claim that the message of any given medium is always another medium.

Writing in the late 1960s, McLuhan viewed media as environments that "work us over completely" and pervasively (*The Medium is the Massage*, 1967). This view situates media in a rather powerful position as the acting agent on the passive and porous subject. In the previous chapters, I suggested, standing atop the shoulders of cross-disciplinary media scholars, that this relationship has flipped: the transmission of media is no longer strictly top-down as media users can now take part in the creation and distribution of meaning across neigh-innumerable platforms. That is not to say that we now live in a utopic, user-generated, free media space, but rather that, as our technologies and paradigms change, once passive, acted-upon consumers can become active participants. Consumers, who have long acted as participatory agents prior to computers, now have a plethora of platforms with which they can interact. McLuhan would seek us to understand each medium in its separateness as an environment, whereas Henry Jenkins has deemed this an age of "convergence," highlighting "the flow of content across multiple media platforms" (*Convergence Culture* 2). The relationship between media and the consumer is more dynamic and complex, with "multiple media industries" and diverse audiences shaping the proliferation of media from all directions (2). From this circulation of media arises "participatory culture," which Jenkins' defines as transformation of media users from spectators to participators in this digital order (331). In chapter one, I discussed how

*The Invention of Hugo Cabret* mimics this new user experience and encourages active participation in and beyond the pages of the text. In the pages to follow, I will examine the official website for *The Invention of Hugo Cabret* (and its proliferations) as a digital paratext that extends the reader or spectator experience and encourages participation in the creation of meaning and materials. These digital spaces are worthy of attention for their position on both ends of the spectrum, from industry-based promotion to user-generated fan material, with far-reaching implications that reify the very notion of convergence: authors, marketers, educators, and readers all participating in the creation and distribution of meaning across diverse media platforms.

Our discussion of digital paratexts actually begins within *The Invention of Hugo Cabret*, following the conclusion of the narrative. Following the two page black-and-white end title, “The End,” are two additional sections: “Acknowledgements” and “Credits.” In the acknowledgements, Selznick briefly discusses his inspiration for the novel, relaying how his encounter with Gaby Wood’s book, *Edison’s Eve: A Magical History of the Quest for Mechanical Life*, lead him to a discovery of Méliès’s automata. This collection, historically, “was donated to a museum, where it was neglected in a damp attic and eventually thrown away. I imagined a boy finding those machines in the garbage, and at that moment, Hugo and this story were born” (*Hugo Cabret* 527). Now, many authors discuss their inspiration for their work, so this excerpt in itself is not altogether noteworthy. What is interesting, however, is the text that follows the autobiographical indulgence: “To see the Maillardet automaton and learn more about it, you can go to <http://www.fi.edu/pieces/knox/automaton/>” (528). The presence of hypertext signals relation between two media platforms (“convergence”) and speaks to

Eliza T. Dresang's theory of digital-age readership under Radical Change Theory. As a behavioral trait, readers, according to this model, display a tendency toward temporal and spatial relationships fostered by the digital environment which includes the seeking out of interactivity, connectivity, and access, in addition to texts that provide similar experiences (Dresang 95). Here, in the backmatter of *Hugo Cabret*, Selznick has provided readers with a starting place, thereby encouraging participation and engagement, and opening up the text to new opportunities for connectivity.

The above link takes readers to The Franklin Institute's website on the History of Science and Technology, and specifically to the webpage "Maillardet's Automaton." Presented with text, images, and video, the reader has several options for how next to engage with the information before them. Two videos on the main page give readers a glimpse of a restored and functional Automaton, and perhaps more significantly, demonstrate the complex interconnectedness of media. Notably, the second video was produced "when Brian Selznick visited The Franklin Institute for a signing of his book, 'The Invention of Hugo Cabret'," in November 2007, describing how the "Institute's Maillardet Automaton was a principal [sic] inspiration for Selznick's book" ("Maillardet's Automaton"). This hypertext, therefore, creates a circuit, uniting *The Invention of Hugo Cabret* to The Franklin Institute, thereby expanding the text-based world into a new digital environment where the reader can interact with an external website and explore the historical and scientific foundations for this aspect of the book.

While not perhaps an "obvious" paratext to *Hugo Cabret*, the above example website represents but one small instance of intertextuality in a work that draws heavily from other media sources. Referencing or calling forth other texts is nothing new, but its

implications in the digital age have significant impact on the way we, and future generations, understand, navigate, organize, and interact with media. To put it simply, internet-based intertextuality leaves a trail and constructs a complex network of linked and shared information and content through hypertext. Without falling too far down the Derridean rabbit hole, this trace is ironically more “tangible” in web-based platforms as users link, share, tag, and forge connections between items, ideas, pages, and places on the Internet. According to Jeremy G. Butler in his chapter, “The Internet and the World Wide Web,” the very terms “hypertext” and “hypermedia” were coined in 1963 to refer to the “associative linking between words and images” from Ted Nelson’s computer systems product, “Project Xanadu” (Harries 41). While Project Xanadu was not released, the emphasis on non-sequential writing and thinking have filtered into our lexicon and platforms through Berners-Lee’s development of hypertext protocol (HTTP) and hypertext markup language (HTML) (Harries 41). Butler’s chapter provides a far more thorough account the technological developments that lead to the Internet and World Wide Web, but for the purposes of this chapter, a rudimentary consideration of hypertext helps situate our discussion of web-based intertextuality.

Thus far the intertextuality within the pages of *Hugo Cabret* has been discussed in terms of remediation: the illustrations remediate (or reimagine, reinterpret, or re-present) themselves and early cinema just as the hybrid graphic novel form reworks film and its picture book counterpart. As P. David Marshall describes in “The New Intertextual Commodity,” the term “intertextuality has been used by various writers to describe how any particular text implies or calls for other texts” (Harries 70). Selznick incorporates film, photography, illustration, graphic novels, and picture books, calling forth a

substantial amount of cultural texts in his bricolage construction of *Hugo Cabret*. On the web, this intertextuality—and the opportunity for intertextuality—extends in multiple and diverse directions, manifesting in the creation of digital paratexts from the top down (author websites, marketing websites, official websites) and the bottom up (fan sites, fan fiction, fan art, tribute videos). In the above example of the Franklin Institute’s webpage, fans of the text may choose to seek out the additional information provided by Selznick, or, alternatively, web users may happen across the Franklin Institute website of their own volition, and then be directed toward Selznick’s novel. The interconnectedness is diverse, and the navigation and participation between these different platforms, like hypertext itself, is nonlinear, and dependent upon user participation.

An active, engaged reader of *Hugo Cabret*, upon completion of the “Credits” at the end of the text, would happen upon this final commentary, which is anything but final in terms of the push toward participation:

This is a work of fiction. While Georges Méliès was a real filmmaker, I have completely imagined his personality.

To find out about the real Georges Méliès, check out the following Web site and then go to the library: <http://www.missinglinkclassichorror.co.uk/index.htm> (Type ‘Méliès’ into the search engine in this site, and you’ll find very good links to his life story.) (*Hugo Cabret* 533)

Several things are noteworthy here. To begin with, the phrase “to find out about” suggests that the reader is intellectually curious and interested in finding out more information about the historical figure in this book. This behavior, under Radical Change Theory, is described as “information-seeking behavior” and represents a shift in attitudes



amongst and about youth readers. According to Dresang, “to view youth information-seeking behavior as generally lacking is to overlook the new behaviors nurtured and facilitated by the digital environment,” which is to say that children are capable, interested, and successful in both “self-generated . . . [and] imposed research tasks” (Dresang, “Access” 182). This means that Selznick’s encouragement is not in vain, but rather that it is safe to speculate that children would seek further information, with or without direction.

In addition to an active and curious reader, the above passage also assumes a certain level of familiarity with Internet research and the ability to search, assess, and locate desired material (as indicated by the imperatives: “check out the following website . . . Type ‘Méliès’ into the search engine. . . go to the library” (*Hugo Cabret* 533)). Problems arise, however, in the assumption of universal access, as not all children have access to computers or other called-upon technologies, nor do all children have the digital literacy skills necessary to participate in this way. Dresang, among others, has written extensively on the need to teach toward the new digital literacy and provide access to technology in schools and libraries; worthy pursuits all. For the purposes of this discussion, I acknowledge my assumption of a reader with access and recognize that this is not the case for all participants. Selznick’s prompt to move beyond the text and into a library may incorporate additional readers without the private means to use the Internet. In addition, the very suggestion to move outside the text itself, whether to particular websites or libraries, encourages and promotes active participation across a diverse array of platforms.

Under this new participatory paradigm, our ideologies surrounding children are

starting to shift—ever so slightly—from a Romantic idealization and construction of The Child (child as innocent and needing protection) toward a more able and active perception of children, or as Dresang calls it, “[child]-as-capable-and-seeking-connection” (Dresang, “Digital Age Learning” 162). In the multimodal world of Hugo Cabret, this connectivity is happening across different forms of media as users interact with the book, film, website, and digital paratexts, to name but a few of the key examples discussed here. *The Invention of Hugo Cabret*, like Dresang, recognizes and rewards the impulse to connect, providing not only additional information and links for readers to explore both within and outside of the novel, but also through Selznick’s official website for the book: [www.theinventionofhugocabret.com](http://www.theinventionofhugocabret.com). By examining the site’s contents, I hope to show how the website remediates *The Invention of Hugo Cabret* through multimodal intertextuality, encourages active participation, and invites readers to extend and explore the world—fictional, historical, creative—of Hugo Cabret.

In keeping with the theme of title screens (or pages), the *Hugo Cabret* website greets visitors with a full page, black and white title screen in the same design as the pages in the book: “Welcome to *The Invention of Hugo Cabret* by Brian Selznick,” followed by the “Enter” link in red text (“Hugo Cabret Website”). This “extra” step of inviting readers into the website and having them click on the word “Enter” creates, from the onset, an interactive experience that requires users’ participation. The only other text on this title page includes author, website, and designer credits, and brief instruction to upgrade streaming video software. There is nothing else to see beyond this black and white page until the “Enter” link is pressed.

Internet users are likely adept at recognizing hypertext and website conventions,

such as the appearance of a link and knowing to click on particular action words (“enter,” “next,” “exit,” and so on), which speaks again to an assumed digital and Internet literacy amongst today’s youth, but for those that are not (and even for those that are), a certain amount of trial-and-error or interactive “play” is required. According to P. David Marshall, play is an important part of the new intertextual commodity with deep roots in children’s culture, specifically the marketing of products and toys based on children’s media (Harries 71). Historically, the mass production of toys for children, and by extension the rise of commodity culture, led to “sophisticated marketing and promotional strategies” that connected toys to “other products and other cultural commodities to provide a wider range of interactions and forms of play” (72). In effect, Marshall continues, the cultural industries were and are “providing elaborate patterns of play across media forms” (73). This is readily seen in the connections between children’s television and breakfast cereals, for instance, but also in the proliferation of websites and other digital paratexts that are used by marketers to promote another media form, whether a television show, movie, book, or video game.

In the case of *Hugo Cabret*, the book, the film, and the website all work to encourage play within and across different media forms of media. Marshall deems this a proliferation of “intertextual commodities,” which is similar to Henry Jenkins’ idea of “convergence culture.” For both Marshall and Jenkins there is a strong emphasis on interactivity and interconnectedness on both ends of the production-consumption spectrum that values participation and play. The difference lies in the perspective of who has agency: for Jenkins, active participants are speaking back and working from the bottom-up to engage and challenge the traditional top-down dissemination of

information. Marshall incorporates this shift while focusing on the industry's investment in play as a new dialectic:

Play as defined by an industry is patterned for the proliferation of cultural commodities through their interlinkages. Play as defined by the audience or actor is precisely the moment when patterns are altered and shifted. The new intertextual commodity identifies the attempt by an industry to provide the rules of the game, while recognizing that the pleasure of the game is that rules are made and remade, transformed and shifted by the players. (80)

Since play is central to interactivity, commodities are becoming more and more linked and connected as they continue to expand outward and across different platforms.

Interactive agency and participation are encouraged to entice the consumer or media user.

Cynically (or realistically) media tie-ins and author websites, such the *Hugo Cabret* website, promote linked materials, such as the book, in an effort to sell more product or increase consumer loyalty. Altruistically, and admittedly more biasedly on my part, intertextual play in *Hugo Cabret* can serve a higher intellectual and educational role in promoting learning and cultural interest in the themes and subjects of the book and film. A return to the website may validate this claim.

Upon entering the site, a golden keyhole appears in the center of the screen surrounded by rich red drapes, effectively remediating the red end papers before the start of the novel (reminiscent of red curtains in front of the theatrical screen). Like the wordless illustrations themselves, no text or visible links appear on screen to guide the visitor, thus engaging the user through play, however minimally, to advance the site. Clicking on the golden lock (indeed, nothing else is present on screen) activates the home

page, which once again is a remediated form of the book's cover. At first glance, the illustration from the dust jacket's cover appears as if color scanned in, Caldecott medal and all, against a plain black background. A closer look reveals rows of differently-paced moving yellow dots along the outer edges of the illustrated gears, giving the illustration a sense of mechanical movement, and signalling that there might be something more to interact with on this page.

Since no immediately-visible links are present, users must continue their exploration by hovering their mouse over different elements of the cover. This seemingly benign activity gives participants a sense of agency, despite its limitations, by "providing a circumscribed agency for the new audience by providing complex patterns of engagement and exploratory architectures" (Marshall/Harries 80). Play and exploration of the website are encouraged through the site's design which changes to reveal links to additional web pages within [theinventionofhugocabret.com](http://theinventionofhugocabret.com). Hovering over the banner bearing the title, "The Invention of Hugo Cabret," reveals a link to "The Making of Hugo Cabret," with the words on the banner changing to reflect this option. Additionally, hovering over the author's name changes the text from "Brian Selznick" to "About Brian Selznick," which leads visitors to the author's information page within the website; moving the cursor over the illustration of the moon changes it to a photo of Hugo from the film and leads to a page about the movie; hovering over the keyhole reveals a small illustration of the cover of *Wonderstruck* and leads to more information about Selznick's latest novel; and lastly, clicking on the Caldecott Medal opens up the "News" web page with information about the Caldecott award, including Selznick's acceptance speech. All of these additional pages accessed from the homepage exist within the *Hugo Cabret*

website, which is more traditionally structured with horizontal and vertical navigation tabs between the different pages.

Once users have navigated into the site from the homepage (hereafter referred to as the “website” or “site” to differentiate it from the animated home page), several options await. Six different web pages can be accessed through the horizontal navigation at the top of the page, listed in order from left to right: About Hugo Cabret; About Georges Méliès; About Remy Charlip; About Brian Selznick; News; and Home. These options are significant because they direct readers toward specific (and real or historical) people (Méliès, Charlip, and Selznick) and therefore support extra-textual research and information-seeking behavior as curious readers can discover more and dig deeper into the text and cultural context. In a way, the website serves as a mini Wiki for *Hugo Cabret*, providing several links (more than 130 links at last count) to a plethora of multimedia texts and hypertexts, including news articles, podcasts, interviews, video clips, books, online stores, art galleries, and stories, to name but a few of the ways Selznick’s website provides users with opportunities to expand their reading experience.

It is worthwhile at this juncture to take a look at a few of pages within the *Hugo Cabret* website, and especially Selznick’s language, to see how the site serves as a platform for intertextuality, convergence, and remediation. *The Invention of Hugo Cabret* is a children’s text, although the audience of the text includes both children and adults. As such, Selznick provides suggestions for different ages of readers, while also engaging readers with diverse interests. Some, like myself, may find the intertextual references and remediation of early cinema the most captivating, or perhaps readers are interested in finding more out about Georges Méliès and silent films. For those readers, the

information page about Georges Méliès offers users a starting place, providing a brief description of who he was, as well as the following personal anecdote:

Georges Méliès (pronounced mel-YEZ) was a famous filmmaker who worked from the 1890s through the 1920s. He made the world’s first science fiction movie. It was called *A Trip to the Moon*, and it was really magical and strange. [Click here](#) if you would like to watch it. The movie was made in 1902. I saw it a long time ago and thought to myself, “one day I would like to write a story about the man who made this film.” If you’d like more detailed information about the life of Georges Méliès, please [click here](#).

In this clear and simple passage, Selznick addresses the visitor as “you,” as if he were having an intimate conversation with the reader, inviting the reader to share in his delight in watching *A Trip to the Moon*. Significantly, Selznick provides a link to the film (a direct example of intertextuality), allowing readers to see the actual film that inspires (and subsequently gets remediated by) the book. Through this paratext, readers are encouraged to participate and extend the scope of reading experience by watching the film and exploring the links to find out more about Méliès and his films through biography websites, radio interviews, and other books.

Intertextuality and other remediated texts are also included, such as the following example, which takes users to a music video: “A rock group called The Smashing Pumpkins made a music video a few years ago which was based on the movies of Georges Méliès. [Click here](#) to check it out...it’s really awesome.” Directing users to a music video in itself is act of intertextuality but it also promotes critical, intertextual reading by modeling the connection between two seemingly disparate texts—a

contemporary rock music video and early silent cinema—which then in turn could inspire readers to see media convergence and intertextuality between *The Invention of Hugo Cabret* (the book and website), *A Trip to the Moon*, and the “Tonight, Tonight” Smashing Pumpkins video. What’s more, Selznick himself has deemed this video, and by extension the experience of remediation, “really awesome,” giving readers (and likely fans) his seal of approval.

What we see throughout the website is Selznick’s personal touch, either through his direct address to readers, or through his commentary: “I thought to myself, ‘one day I would like to write a story about the man who made this film’” (“Hugo Website”). Author websites, such as the *Hugo Cabret* website, recreate and expand upon the “About the Author” blurb often included in the text itself, and allow writers the freedom and the space to talk at length about their process and inspiration. These online spaces become digital paratexts that open up the book for readers, often offering a multimodal site for interaction and exploration. According to Jennifer Buehler in “Ways to Join the Living Conversation about Young Adult Literature,” online spaces, such as critics’ websites, author websites, listservs and discussion boards, provide readers with the opportunity to, as her title suggests, join the conversation about literature and literacy by participating in active and meaningful ways: “Rarely do students and teachers see themselves as people who have the authority to talk back to the gatekeepers; instead, they are on the receiving end of a conversation begun by others. But the conversation about YA books—like the authors who write them—is a living thing. Students and teachers can help shape it” (Buehler 26). These online spaces are exciting and important because they alter the dissemination of information, promote intertextual and participatory exchanges, and help



break down the barrier between producer and consumer, author and reader. The possibilities for discussion between author-and-reader, reader-and-author, and reader-to-reader, allow participants to speak back, an authority that is inherently political. In the democratic exchange of ideas presented here, people have the “authority to talk back to the gatekeepers” and take an active part in shaping the conversation about Young Adult literature.

This seemingly benign act has implications beyond the scope of Young Adult literature, however, and speaks to Henry Jenkins’ core claims about convergence culture. The participatory aspects and the intertextual melding of media represent “a shift in the ways we think about our relations to media,” and the “skills we acquire through play may have implications for how we learn, work, participate in the political process, and connect with other people around the world” (*Convergence Culture* 22-23). Participatory behaviors and bottom-up interaction, creation, and distribution of media and information challenges the top-down hierarchy and traditional delivery and authority of media. In addition to the potential cultural and political ramifications of the convergence, interactive online platforms impact pedagogical approaches and the ideologies of the classroom as a homogenous space. James Bucky Carter addresses this very issue in “Graphic Novels, Web Comics, and Creator Blogs: Examining Product and Process.” According to Carter, and similar to Jenkins and Buehler, the “monospatial focus [of classrooms] is being challenged in the 21st century by new technologies. The use of these technologies often creates new social spaces and intersections when teachers and/or students integrate them into their school and everyday life worlds” (Carter 190). Education, like recent developments in Young Adult Literature, becomes multispatial and

hybrid, a collection of interactive, multimodal communities that simultaneously reflect and foster changing attitudes and use of media and technology.

Author websites, for example, can serve as a digital paratext or companion text for works of literature that encourage and support readers' curiosity beyond the traditional spaces of the written page. Carter and Buehler both look to author's websites and personal blogs as a valuable and viable space for writers to share more about their process and inspiration, inviting "readers to discover the insightful and provocative things authors themselves have said about their novels" (Buehler 27). As suggested above, Selznick is quick to share his creation story of *Hugo Cabret*, providing personal narratives, audio interviews, photographs, additional illustrations, and videos, while also cross-promoting other authors and artisans: "One of my [Selznick's] main inspirations for *The Invention of hugo Cabret* was a book called *Edison's Eve: A Magical Quest for Mechanical Life* by an author named Gaby Wood" ("Hugo Website"). Selznick includes an image of the book's cover, a brief description of the text, and, significantly, a link for readers to buy a copy of *Edison's Eve*. The commercial aspects and opportunities of creator blogs, as Carter suggests, represents one aspect of the examination of Young Adult Literature product and process wherein these new digital spaces are created for and benefit the "primary text, a set of texts, [and] the people and companies producing and consuming them" (Carter 191). However altruistic the author or the website might be, the text itself is a commercial product, and digital paratexts, whether openly or subtly suggestive with their advertisements, work to promote the author and the book as a consumable, branded product.

Selznick's *Hugo Cabret* website offers readers access to personal anecdotes and

discussions of inspiration and process, providing readers with a lot of information and multimodal ways to engage with the story behind the story. While Selznick does this remarkably well, as Carter likewise acknowledges (Carter 196), these sites also work to “reach out to readers or potential readers to advertise tangible products” (Carter 193). From the *Hugo Cabret* homepage, readers can access a direct link to Selznick’s new book, *Wonderstruck*, another valuable resource for readers and educators, as well as an example of Selznick’s own cross-promotion and marketing. Throughout the main pages of the *Hugo Cabret* website, different subpages are offered depending on the subject: “About Hugo Cabret,” for instance, offers subpages “Automata,” “Paris,” “A Train Crash,” and “Links About the Invention of Hugo Cabret,” (to name a few); “About Georges Méliès” and “About Remy Charlip” includes “Biography” and “Hugo: The Movie!”; and the subpages for “About Brian Selznick” include “Biography,” “Interviews,” and “Weird Websites I Like” (“Hugo Website”). Notably, and as a reminder that the book itself a consumer product, all of the pages include links to the “Order Books” page and “Wonderstruck: Brian’s New Book,” (“Hugo Website”). While this may seem highly commercial—indeed, these pages are advertisements—these pages complicate the “buy now!” schemata of product websites.

“Order Books” features five titles, four of which are not written by Selznick but are mentioned as sources of inspiration and admiration, such as Remy Charlip’s *Fortunately*, and *The Dead Bird*, and *Before Hollywood* by Paul Clee. Visitors to the site are directed to seek out their favorite bookseller, with additional encouragement from Selznick to support local retailers: “I used to work at an independent bookstore in New York City, and if you’d like to support your local independent bookstore, [click here](#) to

find the one nearest you” (“Hugo Website”). While readers cannot purchase anything directly from the website, this marketing technique, much like the entire website itself, gives the user agency to make her own decisions regarding the types of information and products to seek beyond the paratext. By placing *The Invention of Hugo Cabret* alongside *Fortunately, The Dead Bird, Edison’s Eve, and Before Hollywood*, Selznick promotes fellow writers (and himself, naturally), and such overt attention to both product and process, and Carter explains, can help “students examine markets and the marketing of texts, i.e., how a text becomes media and is subsumed by media” (Carter 193). As a pedagogical tool, instructors can work from Selznick’s own creation narrative and product suggestions to show the relation between media, particularly the role and process of intertextuality in the construction and critical reading of a text. Throughout the website, Selznick explains how he drew inspiration from *Edison Eve* and also actively promotes the book, which may, according to Carter, “help students see that composition does not take place in a vacuum; rather, creative work is involved by a myriad of sources” whose careful consideration might “help students and teachers become better-informed readers/consumers” (Carter 193). Intertextuality becomes tangible through product promotion, which may help readers and educators make connections across media; a process fostered here through hypertext-driven websites that bridge the gap between novels, paratexts, websites, videos, audio recordings, and other ever-expanding media platforms.

While some of Selznick’s links direct readers to commercial interests, he also incorporates external websites about *Hugo Cabret*, including “an amazing Spanish language website about Hugo. Even if you don’t speak Spanish you should check it out

because there are some illustrated sequences from the book that you can watch which have been set to music, and you can download some high quality jpegs of a few drawings from the book” (“Hugo Website”). The Spanish language website, like the Portuguese, Taiwanese, and Italian versions of the website, offer different user experiences and remediations of the text, including book trailers and video slideshows of Selznick’s illustrations set to music. This creative play remediates the text by creating something new, using the illustrations from the novel to create a new audio-visual format that combines multiple forms and platforms, or as Bolter and Grusin so aptly describe the process in *Remediation*: “Remediation [is] the mediation of mediation” (55). In other words, “each act of mediation depends on other acts of mediation,” in a continual process of reproduction, and by extension, intertextuality, that puts multiple texts in conversation with each other through the reconstruction or re-imagination of the source text(s) (Bolter and Grusin 55). Directing readers to international and foreign-language websites also reifies McLuhan’s concept of a global village, as the internet connects people from around the world in a unified, if intangible, space.

Throughout this close examination of the *Hugo Cabret* website, I have endeavored to show how intertextuality is reified through convergence culture and made available to readers through primary and secondary texts. The website itself remediates the physical book and creates an interactive reading experience that moves readers beyond the written page and into a multimodal space that encourages participation at the intersection of different media forms. Through the inclusion of personal narrative, Selznick invites readers into his creative process, actively demonstrating and encouraging intertextual reading through the inclusion of links to other books, films, illustrations,

objects, and even historical places. Convergence culture has brought together different forms of media, examined here under the lens of remediation as a means to show the common underpinnings, connections, and reworkings of traditional media in our continued journey of the digital era. Additionally, and as “radically changed” readers, interactive spaces foster students’ inquiry and open up a space for the continued study of access, intertextuality, media production and consumption, and exploration beyond the written page. As readers, consumers, and teachers of Young Adult Literature, digital paratexts are worthy of our consideration not only for their pedagogical value that allows students to examine, connect, and interact with authors and fellow readers, but also as a way to actively participate in our media environment and join the conversation about the texts that continue to shape and reflect the conditions, hopes, fears, and texts of our culture.

## Conclusion

Throughout this discussion of the multimodal world of Hugo Cabret, I have endeavored to show how *The Invention of Hugo Cabret*, *Hugo*, and the Hugo Cabret Website are among the brave new forms of Children's Literature and Children's Media, which are reconceptualizing and responding to changing constructions of child readers. Literature for children has long been a place for experimentation with storytelling, and *The Invention of Hugo Cabret* is but one small part of the long-standing tradition of visual and textual innovation. Read through the lenses of radical change, remediation, and convergence culture, *Hugo Cabret* and its surrounding paratexts represent one example of the proliferation and fluidity of media across genres and platforms. These texts and similar works are significant in and for Children's Literature for the ways they simultaneously respond to and encourage active participation and changing literacy models.

In Chapter One: New Picture Book, Old Cinema, I discussed the formal qualities *The Invention of Hugo Cabret* to show how the visual narrative remediates early cinema and also works to reestablish the significance of the printed form (and especially books) in our digital age. As an aesthetic object, the complex integration of image and text acts as a microcosm of our media environment, representing how genres mix and remix each other, simultaneously preserving the past while creating something new. Presenting two-dimensional images in a tangible three-dimensional form reconnects readers to handheld visual literacy and reading experiences in a digital, screen-based world. The pervasive visual intertextuality throughout the hybrid novel foregrounds the importance of a broadly-defined literacy (textual, visual, cultural) and suggests that books, not films,

provide readers with the skills they need to navigate an increasingly visual culture.

Chapter Two: Adaptation as Remediation examines the feature film *Hugo* under the lens of remediation to show how new technologies and media rework older media forms, thereby creating a complex intertextual web spanning across time, genres, and platforms. While this chapter was largely interested in formal qualities and the tension between immediacy and hypermediacy in our media environment, the film's place in culture as a dynamic artistic work persuasively illustrates the sophistication of children's media. By viewing *Hugo* as a remediation of both *The Invention of Hugo Cabret* and of select works of early cinema, I hoped to challenge common understandings of adaptations and show how multiple texts inform, shape, and interact with each other. As a children's film, specifically, *Hugo* invites young viewers to explore the history of motion pictures and adapts a groundbreaking work of children's literature, creating a visually dynamic and culturally rich intertextual experience.

Last, Chapter Three: Click Here to Enter explores how intertextuality is reified through convergence culture and made available to readers through primary and secondary texts. In addition to an examination of associated paratexts, I examined how the website itself remediates *The Invention of Hugo Cabret* and *Hugo*, creating an interactive reading experience that moves readers and spectators beyond the written page or screen and into a multimodal space that encourages active (and interactive) participation in an online environment. Reading the website through the lens of convergence culture helped bring about a better understanding of *Hugo Cabret*'s expansion and connections across different forms of media. Additionally, examined under the lens of remediation, the website illustrates how media is reworked and



reimagined across multiple platforms, creating interactive spaces that reflect our digital era and promote multimodal literacy. As readers, consumers, and teachers of Young Adult Literature, these digital paratexts are worthy of our consideration not only for their pedagogical value that allows students to examine, connect, and interact with authors and fellow readers, but also as a way to actively participate in and help shape our shared media environment.

Challenging texts such as *The Invention of Hugo Cabret* create opportunities for readers, educators, artists, and scholars to participate, as I have here, in the ongoing and ever-changing conversation about the exciting transformations in Children's Literature and our media environment. Hybrid texts call attention to the forms they combine and confound, revealing the fluidity of modern genres and creating critical awareness of marginalized forms. *Hugo Cabret*, for example, encourages us to reconsider and reexamine the place of graphic novels and comics in Children's Literature, potentially bridging the gap between disciplines, or, at the very least, supporting interdisciplinary approaches necessary for our dynamic media environment.

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