THE MUSEUM:

TEXTWORKS, CULTURAL ECONOMY, AND POLYTEXTUAL DISPERSION

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ABSTRACT

The Museum is a theoretical model that aims to render a media-saturated world in which our media have become saturated with media. Corporate conglomeration of the cultural industries has transformed the production and circulation of art; the Museum captures the inter-related complexities of this development in which the notion of a singular text breaks down in the wake of synergistic proliferation. Conceiving of this 'new society' requires new conceptions: a model (the Museum), a language (polytextuality), a discipline (cultural economy), and a product (the textwork).

Section I establishes the 'Geography of the Museum', starting with its chief architect, André Malraux, who designs the neo-aesthetic foundation of the 'Imaginary Museum' (Chapter Three). The post-structural blueprints are then drawn up by Mikhail Bakhtin and Julia Kristeva, giving the Museum its polytextual essence (Chapter Four). The Museum is then physically erected by the conglomerated cultural industries, transforming the Imaginary Museum into a material consumer experience (Chapter Five).

Section II turns to the 'Display of the Museum', cataloguing the different ways in which art manifests itself within the Museum. By way of Roland Barthes, the textwork is theorized, a dialogical designation for the type of networked cultural output that now dominates popular culture (Chapter Seven). Case studies of particularly illuminating textworks are then presented, illustrating the polytextual content of the Museum in a multitude of intersecting forms and mediums. A decisively polytextual museum exhibition, "KRAZY! The Delirious World of Anime + Comics + Video Games + Art", as well as two films – *Children of Men* and *V for Vendetta* – are seen as literal embodiments of the Museum (Chapter Eight). The next textwork is concerned with intermedial structure, and focuses on the Wu-Tang Clan's interpolation of certain cinematic genres, as well as other mediums (Chapter Nine). The final textwork is General Electric, the world's largest conglomerate. *Transformers* and *30 Rock*, two very different GE products, both explicitly exhibit corporate synergy through polytextuality (Chapter Ten). Over-arching cultural shifts are demonstrated by the Museum: access over ownership, circulation over distribution, dialogue over delivery, digital social text over authorship, and multiple over singular.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION AND METHODOLOGY

The powers that are in the media networks take second place to the power of flows embodied in the structure and language of these networks.
- Manuel Castells (476)

Everything is to be disentangled, but nothing deciphered, structure can be followed, 'threaded' (as we say of a run in a stocking) in all its reprises, all its stages, but there is no end to it, no bottom: the space of writing is to be traversed, not pierced.
- Roland Barthes (1986: 53-54)

You can't fight synergy, Lemon. It's bigger than all of us.
- Jack Donaghy, *30 Rock*[1]

'Theory', in all its ambivalent glory, has, from time to time, made attempts at totalizing conceptions of 'society', in all its equally ambiguous complexity. The Spectacle, as theorized by Guy DeBord in *Society of the Spectacle* (1968), perceived modern existence as completely dominated by images, commodity fetishism having infiltrated all aspects of society and reduced all relationships to transactional exchange. Similarly, the Simulacrum, as conceived by Jean Baudrillard in *Simulacra and Simulations* (1984), sees human experience as having entered hyperreality, a simulation of reality rather than reality itself. The Empire, as outlined by Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri in *Empire* (2000), illuminates the domination and potential limitations of globalized capitalism and its relation to the 'multitude'. Totalizing conceptions such as these are typically attacked for their hubris; the very idea that you could encompass the complexity of 'society' with a single model is treated with contempt, gaps and flaws are exposed, and critics retreat back into their own specializations. On the contrary, it is this increasing complexity of 'society', however broadly defined, which *requires* and *demands* such bold, inherently incomplete, but nonetheless valuable theories. In light of this need, and from the shadow of the

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[1] Episode 307 – "Senor Macho Solo"

empire of simulated spectacle, I humbly offer up my own conception. The Museum, while similarly grounded in a Marxist view of global, networked capitalism, departs from the preceding theories by focusing not on capital, but on the arguably more true measure of human experience: our art.

The Matrix (Wachowski Brothers 1999) was not just a film; it was a network of intertwined narratives and products, existing in the form of film, music, anime, DVD, graphic novel, short story, website, commercial tie-in, merchandise, video game, massively multiplayer online role-playing game (MMORPG), academic criticism – even a new religion. Likewise, hip hop is not merely a musical genre; it is the mix of intermedial styles and genres into a lifestyle and a movement that revolves around a web of music, celebrity, dance, industry, press coverage, free-styling, music videos, graffiti art, varying subcultures, DJing, fashion, global flows, and on and on. *Harry Potter*, **not** just a book. *The Simpsons*, **not** just a television show. *Grand Theft Auto*, **not** just a video game. Networks of intersecting forms and mediums[2] surround these texts, and no longer in a merely superficial or ancillary way. *Star Wars*, *American Idol*, Super Mario, *Pirates of the Caribbean*, James Bond, *Lord of the Rings*, Batman, *Lost*, *Halo* – these most profitable and successful of franchises are no longer the exception, but the rule in an entertainment market primarily focused on integrating its product across multiple mediums and revenue streams. The notion of a singular text (Book, Film, Recording, Video Game) is breaking down in the wake of this synergistic proliferation.

The 'bulk' – by which I mean not just the vast majority but also the 'heaviness' determined by cultural pervasiveness and influence – of Western (and increasingly global) popular cultural output is explicitly intertextual and intermedial. The networks of external texts

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[2] I use 'mediums' to avoid the confusion that the word 'media' sometimes brings; as opposed to some monolithic 'the media', I am referring to multiple singular mediums.

surrounding a 'single' text are matched by an internal drive toward explicit intertextuality and intermediality: our media texts are increasingly permeated and concerned with other media texts. Certain forms have always been intimately intertwined (cinema's relation to music for example), but the cross-pollination between all forms within the entertainment market – film, television, music, popular press, video games, celebrity, the internet[3] – has been slowly evolving to the point where we must now consider intertextuality and intermediality not just as some marginal 'postmodern' element, nor a simple corporate strategy of 'double-dipping,' but the core logic, both economically and culturally, of popular cultural forms.

If the fundamental structure of our popular culture has shifted through a process of ever-complexifying networks of interrelations, then our approach to understanding and conceptualizing culture must also reflect this change. In an attempt to rectify this perceived lack, I propose a theoretical model deemed simply the Museum, an updated employment of André Malraux's Imaginary Museum applied to the contemporary, conglomerated entertainment market. With the advent of technologically reproducible art, Malraux envisioned a universal culture of art housed in an Imaginary Museum. The intervening years have seen the ascension of corporate cultural industries that dominate the production and circulation of art and popular culture. Put simply, the Museum is no longer imaginary; it is our material consumer experience. Within this Museum, where a multitude of texts and mediums interact, a new system of textual relations is established which I deem polytextuality, an update to the much-maligned and misunderstood theoretical concept of intertextuality. Polytextuality is further refined with the introduction of one more conception, the textwork. The cultural artifacts, or textworks, produced

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[3] One could argue for the inclusion of other forms (sports, fashion, 'new media') and 'older' forms (theatre, painting, photography). One could convincingly argue for the further division of forms ('popular press' and 'internet' are rather vague terms, admittedly). And one could certainly argue against the inclusion of certain forms (video games and 'celebrity'), but the spirit of this argument, as will become evident, relies not on such matters of classification and demarcation. In fact, it flies in the face of such hairsplitting.

in the Museum can be as narrowly defined as a word, frame, segment or scene within a particular text, a 'whole' text itself, a network of texts, a system of genre interaction, or even a corporation or mode of art. It is the breakdown of traditional conceptions of the text, and their reformulation as a network, that is captured by the textwork. By extension, this conceptualization, and in fact spatialization, of cultural artifacts can be extended to the ways in which culture itself is expressed, propelled, or facilitated through these textworks. As such, the concept of the Museum and its polytextual textwork touches upon a wide variety of issues, as diverse as intellectual property and piracy, evolving conceptions of aesthetics, audience appropriation and active fandom, new media and network society, transmedia storytelling and intertextual analysis, and so on. With the Museum, I aim to present a model capable of rendering a media-saturated world in which our media have become saturated with media.

The central proposition of this project might then be that both the aesthetically contingent, universal culture of art housed in the Imaginary Museum (as proposed by Malraux), and the inherently intertextual (or polytextual) nature of the text (as advanced by Mikhail Bakhtin, Julia Kristeva, and Roland Barthes), are now being exploited by the conglomerated cultural industries, whose cultural economic logic is founded on synergy within the network. The Museum, polytextuality, and the textwork are thus my effort to reconfigure our understanding of this cultural economic shift. However, this central proposition is implicitly and paradoxically undercut by the old (by postmodern standards) adage that there can be no central proposition. This conviction is no mere "incredulity toward meta-narratives" (Lyotard xxiv), nor is it another case of navel-gazing self-reflexivity. On the contrary, I prefer the nebulous 'post-structural' to the equally nebulous 'postmodern' for these very reasons: the new networked cultural logic is post-narrative and post-reflexive.

Malraux, in his exploration of the contingency of art, finds that the only commonality among the disparate history of art is not narrative, but the desire to create 'new worlds'. Narrative is no doubt central to this goal, and will remain so, but the over-arching strategy is that of 'world-building', a notion we will find abundantly visible in contemporary pop culture, from the extensive polytextual universes of *Lord of the Rings*, *Star Wars*, and *Harry Potter*, to video games in which building new worlds is the central element of play. In these cultural worlds constructed with polytextuality, in which media are saturated with media, 'reflexivity' is now a foregone conclusion; there is nothing but reflexivity when *the medium is the medium*.

(IT'S ALL ABOUT THE) METHODOLOGY

To attain the multiple, one must have a method that effectively constructs it.
- Deleuze and Guattari (22)

The critical approach I employ in this project takes its initial cue from Slavoj Žižek, who launched a series of books on the metaphor of "Short Circuits": a critical reading which "cross[es] wires that don't usually touch – to take a major classic (text, author, notion) and read it in a short circuiting way, through the lenses of a 'minor' author, text, or conceptual apparatus" (ix). Žižek himself proffers his own unique brand of Lacanian-Marxist-Hegelian thought, 'short circuiting' his own 'perverted' interpretations of these philosophers together and applying it to politics, psychoanalytic theory, and popular culture. From a form-equals-function point-of-view, the short circuit methodology is even more well-suited to the field of networked culture. My own short circuit starts with Malraux's philosophy of aesthetics, fuses it with a post-structuralist interpretation of intertextuality (from Bakhtin to Kristeva to Barthes), and applies it to a cultural

economic reading of the contemporary, consolidated entertainment market. We might call it post-structuralist cultural economics and neo-aesthetics. Or the intertextual aesthetics of economics, the aesthetic economics of intertextuality, and the economic intertextuality of aesthetics. The marriage of post-structural intertextuality with cultural economy, as officiated by Marx, in a church without walls designed by Malraux. The 'lens' created through such an enterprise should result in a method which can better account for the type of networked cultural output that now dominates our mass culture.

This 'spiritual inspiration' of Žižek's 'short circuit' is matched by Gilles Deleuze's unique 'methodology' for approaching important philosophers. "What got me by during that period," Deleuze recollects about his earliest works, "was conceiving of the history of philosophy as a kind of ass-fuck, or, what amounts to the same thing, an immaculate conception. I imagined myself approaching an author from behind and giving him a child that would indeed be his but would nonetheless be monstrous" (Deleuze and Guattari x). Perhaps recasting the sentiment as more responsible academic 'promiscuity,' I approach Malraux and the post-structuralists with a similarly 'bastardizing' objective. Malraux's aesthetics were designed for the Louvre and the opera-going set; he was motivated by a belief in the transcendental power of art and high culture. My Malraux enjoys galleries, shopping malls, video games, and YouTube with indiscriminate aplomb. Malraux 2.0 accepts the reality that art is just as likely to promote a dictator or sell you a lifestyle as it is to transcend or enlighten. Likewise, the original post-structuralists were explicitly political, fighting on one side (the left side) of what they thought was a revolution in 1968; my post-structuralism has corporate sponsorship.

The unique philosophy of Gilles Deleuze effects this project in another crucial way as well. Rather than the grand pursuit of truth or reason, Deleuze defines philosophy as the creation

of concepts that define a particular range of thinking with which to grapple with reality. One such valuable conception is Deleuze and Guatarri's rhizome, formulated in *A Thousand Plateaus*, which is a concept based on multiplicity, aiming to move away from the traditional binary structure of Western thought. A figure borrowed from biology, the rhizome is a model in strict opposition to the conventional figure of the tree, which operates on the principles of foundation and origin. The rhizome, on the contrary, is proliferating and indiscriminate; it operates on the principles of connection and heterogeneity. There can be no points or positions within a rhizome: "any point of a rhizome can be connected to anything other, and must be" (7). Neither mimetic nor organic, a rhizome is a mobile and bifurcating series of connections; it only ever attempts to *map*, never resolve. This map is "always detachable, connectable, reversible, modifiable, and has multiple entryways and exits and its own lines of flight" (21). A rhizome "has neither beginning nor end, but always a middle (*milieu*) from which it grows and which it overspills" (21). Both in form (the networked cultural artifacts that are my subject) and function (the networked critical apparatus that is my methodology), the metaphor of the rhizome – particularly its cartographic objective – looms large in this project.

In order to proceed with this mapping endeavour, however, parameters must be set, and we arrive at our first impasse. The central problematic of this project is setting the parameters, because essentially, re-defining parameters is what this project is all about. Primarily it is those ambiguous, nominal conceptions that are unable to be concretely defined because they are constantly evolving, particularly 'Art' and 'Text,' that I will spend the most time attempting to update and redefine. There are also academic formulations, such as intertextuality, that have already been debated and reconfigured to such a degree that a critic has to identify his or her own specific definition of the term in order to utilize it pragmatically. Finally, there are those

parameters that must be set in order to limit the scope of one's field. What exactly constitutes 'the cultural industries' is a central concern here. Interchangeably referred to as either the entertainment market, popular culture, the Culture Industry, the cultural industries, the Cultural-Industrial Complex – the purposeful ambiguity I direct toward the broad range of cultural circulation is meant as a gesture towards the vast amount of intersecting products, forms, and mediums that is our cultural reality, as well as the indefinable nature of a popular culture that is continually fragmenting. The *swarm* is a metaphor used in Chapter Nine when discussing the Wu-Tang Clan, but it is also appropriately representative of networked culture; it is diffuse, dispersed, and it travels quickly. When discussing the existential nature of art, text, and culture, containing the argument to a limited set of narrowly-defined parameters seems disingenuous, perhaps even counter-productive.

On the other hand, in order to minimize the potential for such an argument to become too diffuse and unwieldy, a simplistic, linear path will be followed, establishing the core tenets of the project: the model (the Museum), the language (polytextuality), the discipline (cultural economy), and the product (the textwork). Three case studies then follow this theoretical work to illustrate it in action. *Section I* will establish the 'Geography of the Museum', starting with its chief architect, André Malraux, who designs the neo-aesthetic foundation (**Chapter Three**). The post-structural blueprints are then drawn up by Mikhail Bakhtin and Julia Kristeva, giving the Museum its polytextual essence (**Chapter Four**). Finally, the Museum is erected by the contemporary conglomerated cultural industries, transforming the Imaginary Museum into a material consumer experience (**Chapter Five**).

Section II turns to the 'Display of the Museum', as I play the role of museum curator, cataloguing the different ways in which art manifests itself within the Museum. We begin by

theorizing, by way of Roland Barthes, the textwork (**Chapter Seven**), a dialogical designation

for the type of networked cultural output that now dominates popular culture. The remaining

chapters are then case studies of particularly illuminating textworks, illustrating the function of

the Museum and its polytextuality in a multitude of intersecting forms and mediums, each

dedicated to a certain interpretation: meaning, structure, and power. We start with literal

embodiments of the Museum (**Chapter Eight**), as seen in a decisively polytextual museum

exhibition, "KRAZY! The Delirious World of Anime + Comics + Video Games + Art" at the

Vancouver Art Gallery, as well as two films – *Children of Men* (Cuarón 2006) and *V for

Vendetta* (McTeigue 2005) – that bring the Museum to the big screen.

The next textwork is concerned with intermedial genre (**Chapter Nine**), and focuses on

hip hop's interpolation of certain cinematic genres and practices, as well as other mediums, as

evidenced in the Wu-Tang Clan's 'samurai swarm'. The final and most extensive textwork

under consideration will be General Electric (**Chapter Ten**), the world's largest conglomerate,

and majority owner of NBC Universal. *Transformers* (Bay 2007) and *30 Rock* (Fey 2006-

current) are two very different GE products, but both explicitly exhibit corporate synergy in a

polytextual manner. Despite the vast difference in size and scope of the textworks presented,

some over-arching shifts are demonstrated by all artifacts of the Museum: access over

ownership, circulation over distribution, dialogue over delivery, digital social text over

authorship, and multiple over singular.

SECTION I – THE GEOGRAPHY OF THE MUSEUM

CHAPTER 2: INTRODUCTION

To begin, a framework must be established to conceive of the Museum – a theoretical

blueprint of sorts. This will occur in three steps with three distinct building blocks. First, I

suggest a 'return to Malraux,' particularly his underused concept of 'le musée imaginaire.' A

result of mechanical reproduction and expanded cultural inclusion, the Imaginary Museum – or

'museum without walls' – is the symbolic housing of the first universal culture of art: all of the

arts of all civilizations. The Imaginary Museum is even more fitting today than it was in

Malraux's time, as technological advances and globalization have dramatically increased and

improved our access to the universal culture of art. This spatial metaphor can be improved,

however, with the addition of the second core element: the theory of intertextuality. The new

relationships forged amongst otherwise disjointed texts in the Imaginary Museum, then, are

simply making explicit the inherently intertextual nature of all texts. Together, the two form a

powerful spatial metaphor capable of conceptualizing our heavily-mediated, highly technocratic

society. The third and final step in erecting the Museum is to add the base to the superstructure:

a cultural economic evaluation of the contemporary entertainment market. This consideration

will attempt to make sense of the dense web of corporate conglomeration that is responsible for

the production of the vast majority of our popular culture. The high degree of concentration of

ownership in the media industries will be mapped out and evaluated from the perspective of

cultural economy. Synergy, the vertical and horizontal integration so greatly desired by

corporate conglomerates, will demonstrate how fundamental polytextuality is to the cultural

industries, and how it facilitates the Museum.

CHAPTER 3: ANDRÉ MALRAUX AND THE IMAGINARY MUSEUM

As a renowned polymath and 'renaissance man', André Malraux is a fitting spiritual forbearer for this project. His method and body of writing is also appropriate, spread as it is across multiple forms (fictional novel, essay, speech, preface, etc.). Lacking a singular, coherent philosophical framework, however, along with a prosaic writing style that hinders translation (some is yet to be translated in English), Malraux is not a widely regarded figure in the English-speaking academy. A reconsideration of Malraux's post-WWII philosophy of art will illustrate how it is not only valid and perceptive, but, as we shall see, increasingly pertinent. The 'aesthetic revolution' Malraux identifies has taken on a new form in the 'digital revolution' of the twenty-first century.

In the aftermath of World War II, Malraux began an ambitious project concerning the philosophy of art, particularly the transformation in what was considered 'art' as a result of technological reproduction. Three volumes entitled *Psychologie de l'art* first appeared in 1947 and 1949 (translated as *The Psychology of Art* in 1949 and 1950), and were followed by a revised version in 1951 called *Les Voix du silence* (translated as *The Voices of Silence* in 1953). *La Métamorphose des dieux* in 1957 (*The Metamorphosis of the Gods*, 1960) completed the project, though it was continually revised and rewritten into the 1970s, with various sections and versions being published and translated separately (*Museum Without Walls*, for example, is a 1967 reworking of the first volume of *The Voices of Silence*, and will be used extensively here). Both literature and philosophy, this hefty piece of work deserves – and calls out for – reconsideration and application.

Following Walter Benjamin's influential work, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" (1936), Malraux observed that new technical means, particularly the advent of photography, allowed reproductions of artworks to proliferate to such a degree that everyone (in theory) could experience the multitudes of the art world, no longer just the cultural elite. Whereas Benjamin focuses on mechanical reproduction's emancipation of art from ritual (the shattering of the 'aura') and the political ramifications of such a development, Malraux takes a step back to look at how the Western art world was already rapidly changing in the closing years of the nineteenth century prior to the mass dissemination of photography.

For Malraux, art is what culture *deems* art, and thus, what is displayed within the world's museums would seem a natural assessment. So important have museums become to our conception of art that we forget they are a relatively recent invention of modern Europe, having existed for less than three hundred years. Furthermore, the type of content museums have contained has shifted dramatically. The nineteenth century museum was almost singularly focused on Western painting and sculpture since the Renaissance, with the possible addition of Greek, Roman and Egyptian works. Around the turn of the century, however, museums began including not just works from earlier periods of European culture, but artefacts and objects from non-European cultures and from all time periods; African masks, Mayan statues, and Sumerian pottery were suddenly being exhibited alongside the 'masterworks.' As Malraux describes it, this new art world was an:

> immense domain where Romanesque consorts with the arts of the Ancient East, of the empires of Asia and America plunged in a never-ending medievaldom, of epochless continents, we have glimpses of that enigmatic power which unites for us, as living actualities, the states of the earliest Pharaohs and Sumerian Kings, the sculpture of Michelangelo and the Chartres masters, the frescos at Assisi and those of Nara, the masterworks of Rembrandt, Piero della Francesca and Van Gogh – Cezanne's too, and the Lascaux bison. (1960: 1-2)

In the era in which Malraux was writing, the new Western conception of art encompassed works from across the globe, and from the beginning of prehistory; the world of art was now globally transcultural and historically all-encompassing.

This cultural inclusiveness, for Malraux, represented nothing short of '*une révolution esthétique*.' By attributing artistic status to this wide range of items, as well as objects that could not be physically moved into museums (frescoes and stain glass windows, or the Sphinx, for example), the meaning of the word 'art' changed. With such a dramatically increased inclusivity, Malraux foresaw the grand opening of the '*musée imaginaire*': a symbolic housing for the entire world's art collection. The Western art world of Malraux's time was the first given "access to a world in which a Mexican god becomes a statue, not a mere fetish, and Chardin's still lifes join the Chartres *Kings* and the gods at Elephanta on a footing of equality: the first world of a truly *universal* art" (1960: 21; original emphasis). This egalitarian, universal world of art promised by the newly inclusive museum would only be possible by moving *beyond* the confines of its own physical limitations: "our new 'Museum without Walls' adds to every real museum not only the contents of all the others, but the cathedral too – not to mention the tombs and caves that none of them could ever house" (1960: 22). In addition to these tombs and caves now being considered 'art', a much wider access to them was granted with the advent of photography. "A museum without walls has been opened to us," Malraux exclaims, "and it will carry infinitely farther that limited revelation of the world of art which the real museums offer us within their walls" (1967:12). Existing in the collective imaginary and manifested primarily in photographic reproductions, the Museum Without Walls extends far beyond even the most elaborate physical museum.

For such a drastic transformation of the cultural definition of art to occur within a few short decades, Malraux believed there must have been something more at work than merely the increase in familiarity with other cultures Europe was experiencing at the time, and more than just the declining power of the Church. Besides, many of these objects and artefacts were *already* familiar to Europeans; they were just considered 'primitive' and unworthy of classification as art. What was it, then, that motivated this relatively sudden change of heart? For Malraux, it was a change in *vision*, namely, the way the West viewed and conceived art. For millennia, art was in the service of the sacred – ritualistic and religious objects were venerated as symbols of the gods. Following this aesthetic revolution, however, these same objects would be considered under the broad rubric of 'art,' even though many of the cultures from which these works arose did not even have a notion or word for what we now call 'art.' The severance of art from its contextual function enabled patrons of museums to look at these objects and artefacts from all cultures and all time periods with an unmotivated, somewhat indifferent vision: "the metamorphosis of the past was a metamorphosis of our way of seeing" (1960: 21). Occurring parallel to this new perspective on historical 'art' was a reconfiguration of modern art's function: no longer singularly in the service of the gods, art was increasingly, but not exclusively, founded in the secular ideal of 'beauty,' followed by a focus on representation and form itself. Malraux traces the historical trajectory of such a transformation at great length and with great depth – appropriately calling it the 'metamorphosis of the gods' – but it is the ramifications of such a history with which I wish to interact.

The extreme radicality of this '*révolution esthétique*' is revealed when considering the conclusions Malraux draws from these developments. The study of aesthetics and the philosophy of art has long treated art from an essentialist standpoint, a perspective largely

maintained to this day. Art is believed to be a permanent, intrinsic component of the human experience. Even those cultures that had no word for art, that crafted objects solely for the gods (or for reasons we cannot and will not ever know), contain supposedly universal formal qualities that we can call artistic. They were produced and received in a system of 'cultural practices' comparable to what we now deem art. We are thus quick to retroactively classify said objects as art. This process should not be so simple, Malraux warns. We can (and do) classify these objects as art, but only because what art *is*, is contingent. Malraux draws a distinction between the *means* of art (physical production) and the *ends* to which cultures have employed art. The means may indeed be universal, as humans have been drawing and painting since prehistoric times, but the ends to which art is utilized is radically contingent, as the evolution from the sacred to the sublime (and beyond) suggests. And what better place to witness (and enact) this separation between the ends and the means, this transformation of function, than the art museum?

As Derek Allan explains, Malraux and his focus on the museum reveals "the specificity, and ultimately the contingency, of the experience we name the experience of 'art' – a recognition, in other words, that this experience – this form of response – is distinctively *ours* and not something that we can, or even need to, see as deriving in some way from the 'true nature' or 'essential purposes' of the objects concerned" (2003: 32). Our response to the experience of art, as shown by Malraux, is facilitated by the Imaginary Museum, in which we collect all of the arts of all civilizations, divorcing them from their original function. It is just one possible approach among many. Rather than regarding art as a fixed, universal condition of the human experience, we would be more precise, as Allan suggests, to conceive of it as "inherently *transient*" (37; original emphasis). The validity of such a statement is rendered

obvious by taking stock of the current status of our twenty-first century Imaginary Museum; what we deem art has transformed dramatically, even since Malraux's time.

Although it might contradict Malraux's sanctified vision of transcendent art, but certainly comply with his conception of the contingent nature of art, the contemporary Imaginary Museum now contains comic books and radio programs and video art and graffiti and blaxploitation films and blogs and late-night television. The erasure of 'high' and 'low' culture is all but assured, and the Museum Without Walls now spans our entire cultural output, be that 'pop,' or 'corporate,' or 'cult,' or 'avant-garde,' or otherwise. That pivotal question raised by Malraux – what do we deem art? – is currently being answered with 'just about anything'. One might trace a rough trajectory from Giotto and Botticelli (art no longer confined to the sacred) to Manet and Picasso (art no longer confined by function, but is its own value) to Duchamp and Warhol (art no longer confined by aesthetic form) to Dylan and Hitchcock (art no longer withheld from commercialism, but decisively created with it in mind). Regardless of the particular progression, there is no denying the current validation – by the museum and the academy – of popular culture as art. Already in 1987, Michael Schudson could claim, after tracing the in-roads popular culture study had made in literature, history, and social science, that "popular culture has attained a new legitimacy in American universities" (495). Alongside those African masks, Mayan statues, van Goghs and Picassos, the Imaginary Museum now includes *Psycho* (Hitchock 1960) and "Highway 61 Revisited." Fittingly, as I write this thesis, a new exhibition has opened up at the Vancouver Art Gallery: "KRAZY! The Delirious World of Anime + Comics + Video Games + Art." With its aim 'to redefine the scope of visual culture in the 21st century,' this exhibit is but one example of the vast cultural expansion of the Imaginary Museum, and will be explored in detail in Chapter Eight.

This proliferation in forms now considered art is met by an expansion in function. Just as our *means* to create art have expanded and multiplied, so too have our *ends*. While Malraux certainly was not restricting art's function to either the sacred or the sublime, he does not consider any of the multitude of possible functions of art that we now hold to be common practice. Entertainment, cultural membership, social integration, provocation, innovation, education, propaganda, just plain fun – these ends, and countless others, alone or in combination, along with the explosion in means, has led to an Imaginary Museum far more vast and inclusive than Malraux could ever have himself imagined.

In addition to the *means* and *ends* of art, we must also consider the increasing *circulation* of art. The Imaginary Museum conceptualized the housing of all the world's art, but it did not consider its movement. The rapid advancement of information communication technologies (ICTs) have made dramatic changes not just in access to information, but also speed. In the 1980s, Microsoft sought to put a personal computer on every desk and in every home, and has made great strides in accomplishing that goal in the intervening years (in the developed world at least). Around the turn of the century, Google's stated aim was to archive and organize all of the world's information and make it universally accessible and useful. An ambitious goal to say the least, but the exponential advancement they have already made in its short history lends credence to their objective. The digital revolution, and the corresponding increase in access and circulation of art, has fulfilled – or made real, in a strangely virtual way – the promise of an Imaginary Museum.

"A clear challenge that Malraux presents to aesthetics," Derek Allan argues, "is to develop an account of art that takes account of the *full* range of objects now regarded as art, and that frames its questions and develops its answers, as Malraux has done, on this much broader

canvas" (2003: 35). Entranced as he was with the history leading to this newly broadened

canvas, and the metamorphosis of perception accorded to previous artworks about their function,

Malraux could only hint at the possibilities of metamorphosis *within* the Imaginary Museum. He

considered the way art books juxtaposed different forms and divorced works of their

surroundings. He considered the way photography lent a new meaning to statues on account of

their lighting. He even considered cinema's impact with the invention of editing. But Malraux

did not – could not – consider the implications of what kind of art would be created from *within*

the Museum Without Walls. He could only speculate:

> It is the world in which these images speak a different language, and the same language:
> a language of statues and the language of sculptures. And in this world that
> metamorphosis substitutes simultaneously for those of the sacred, of faith, of the unreal
> or the real, the new sphere of reference of artists is the museum without walls of each of
> them; the new sphere of reference of art is the museum without walls of all. (1967: 231-
> 232)

Language, more than Malraux could have known, is the key to this new sphere of reference in

the art world. Linguistic and semiotic theory, in its deconstruction of language and texts, would

give rise to an understanding of the newly forged relationships among otherwise disjointed texts

within the Imaginary Museum. Malraux sketched out the plans for the Museum, but it would be

the post-structuralists who would design its layout.

CHAPTER 4: TOWARD A THEORY OF POLYTEXTUALITY

If we accept Malraux's formulation of an Imaginary Museum that fosters a universal culture of art, forging new relationships amongst otherwise disjointed texts, then it warrants interpretation within the paradigm of intertextuality. Julia Kristeva originally coined the term '*intertextualité*' in 1967 (1980: 66), and much of the engagement with the term today still centres around her particular brand of intertextuality established within the *Tel Quel* post-structuralist scene in late 1960s Paris. It is worth noting at the outset, however, that intertextuality – in its many, inevitably ambiguous and neologistic iterations – is a concept or notion that has been evoked, explicitly or not, whenever there has been discourse about 'texts'. Whether that discourse was centred around alternative terms (influence, imitation, allusion, quotation, adaptation, etc.), or engaged with the term intertextuality itself but with a different interpretation, it is essential to bear in mind that intertextuality, like any philosophical or theoretical enterprise, has its own histories and contexts; it is by no means a fixed theory or practice. As such, I would be remiss not to outline my own engagement with the term. Intentionally, the following chapter is heavy on quotation, intended to mimic an 'intertextual' weaving together of various sources.[4] Following this historical overview, we will arrive at a conception more befitting of the kind of textual relationships that are produced by the conglomerated cultural industries: polytextuality.

As I wish to put intertextuality to work in the Museum, I will be primarily focusing on Kristeva and Barthes' post-structuralist use of the term, but without their political agenda of

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[4] If not for pesky academic stipulations concerning plagiarism, I would have constructed this entire chapter out of unacknowledged quotations as a demonstration of the spirit of intertextuality. For an extra dimension of tongue-in-cheek reflexivity, I would have liked to plagiarize two secondary sources, Graham Allen's *Intertextuality* and Susan Orr's *Intertextuality: Debates and Contexts*. As it stands, plagiarism-free, these two guides were invaluable in disentangling the many dimensions of intertextuality.

wanting to disrupt the concept of fixed meaning, corresponding to the upheaval of 1968. Instead, special attention will be paid to intertextuality's demonstrable application within the Museum, and my political agenda is concerned with corporate conglomeration. My engagement with intertextuality is thus fundamentally preoccupied with how it overtly and explicitly embodies the new culture of consumerism, with an eye toward a spatial conception of such a manifestation I deem the Museum. A semiotic and metaphysical discourse of intertextuality, though inevitable, is not so much my focus as is the unequivocal realization of such a discourse within our contemporary popular culture. Such a project begins, as it did for Kristeva, with the Russian literary theorist Mikhail Bakhtin.

Plato and Aristotle's work on 'imitation' may be regarded as the first historical antecedent for a theory of intertextuality, and de Saussure's work on linguistics and semiology a significant foundation, but it is Bakhtin who provides the radical insight, in his various work during the 1920s,[5] that language is primarily predicated upon social context and social specificity – a consideration missed in both formalism and Saussurean linguistics. According to Bakhtin, "Each word tastes of the context and contexts in which it has lived its socially charged life; all words and forms are populated by intentions" (1981: 293). *Utterance* is a key term, a word which encapsulates the historical and social significance of specific linguistic interactions. "Not only the meaning of the utterance," writes Bakhtin/Medvedev, "but also the very fact of its performance is of historical and social significance, as, in general, is the fact of its realization in the here and now, in given circumstances, at a certain historical moment, under the conditions of the given social situation" (120). Arguing against the study of language exclusively from an abstract viewpoint, as de Saussure had advocated, Bakhtin identifies language's "ceaseless flow

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[5] What precisely constitutes Bakhtin's oeuvre is still debated, particularly the disputed authorial claims of Medvedev and Volosinov. Following Allen (2000), I will refer to the contested works as Bakhtin/Medvedev and Bakhtin/Volosinov.

of becoming" (Allen 18) – its reliance and response to previous utterances and to patterns of meaning and context. For Bakhtin/Volosinov, language is a reciprocal relationship; "word is a two-sided act" (86). This ability of language to contain multiple voices – one's own as well as others – Bakhtin labels *heteroglossia*, a term which explicitly lends primacy to context over text. The significance for a theory of intertextuality arrives here, in the result of ascribing language its plurality and social specificity, and what would amount to Bakhtin's central contribution to literary theory: dialogism.

For Bakhtin, all language – and therefore all thought – is dialogic: a continual, dynamic, and relational process of dialogue. Language and thought exist only in response to what has already been said, and in anticipation of what will be said in the future. Indeed, language seeks out further response: "The word in living conversation is directly, blatantly, oriented toward a future answer-word: it provokes an answer, anticipates it and structures itself in the answer's direction" (1981: 280). Everything means and is understood as part of a greater whole; continual communication and constant interaction between meanings constitutes the epistemological mode of our linguistic world. Bakhtin views the 'literary word' as the key structural unit and space of intersection within this dialogism:

> If we imagine the *intention* of such a word, that is, its *directionality toward the object*, in the form of a ray of light, then the living and unrepeatable play of colors and light on the facets of the image that it constructs can be explained as the spectral dispersion of the ray-word... its spectral dispersion in an atmosphere filled with the alien words, value judgments and accents through which the ray passes on its way toward the object; the social atmosphere of the word, the atmosphere that surrounds the object, makes the facets of the image sparkle. (1981: 277)

However, this inherent multiplicity and plurality – this 'sparkle' – of language is under constant threat, Bakhtin claims, from ideological and state power that is always striving "to make the sign uniaccentual" (1986: 23). A struggle exists between the "verbal-ideological centralization and

unification" of language and the "uninterrupted processes of decentralization and disunification" (1981: 272). The centripetal and centrifugal forces of language are in constant conflict, visible in the opposition between monologic and dialogic utterance.

One such example of centrifugal force Bakhtin identifies is the ancient tradition of *carnival*, in which profane language and bodily excess served to overturn the official ideology and promote an alternative collective society, if only for a single day. The modern successor to this deeply dialogic, *carnivalesque* tradition, Bakhtin argues, is the modern novel. Often using Dostoevsky as an example, Bakhtin finds that the novel – and the polyphonic novel especially – presents a truly dialogic "*double-voiced discourse*" (1981: 324). Because "[d]iversity of voices and heteroglossia enter the novel and organize themselves within it into a structured artistic system" (300), the novel is "a phenomenon multiform in style and variform in speech and voice," confronting the reader "with several heterogeneous stylistic unities, often located on different linguistic levels and subject to different stylistic controls" (261). Rather than an objective, authorial voice (as in the epic poem, for example), the novel employs a polyphonic world of varying and competing voices, personalities, languages, discourses, and worldviews. Even within a single voice, utterance, or word does this polyphony and heteroglossia arise. The result is an appropriate preliminary definition for intertextuality: "the language of a novel is the system of its 'languages'" (262).

Even at this early stage of development, we can already foresee how generous intertextual theory will prove to be towards a refinement of Malraux's Imaginary Museum. With the advent of the Museum, the history of which Malraux so carefully delineates, the inherently dialogic process of language Bakhtin introduces can be seen to be given a home and space of interaction in the Museum. Bakhtin can even be seen to gesture towards the Museum when he

suggests that the "verbal-ideological decentering [of heteroglossia] will occur only when a national culture loses its sealed-off and self-sufficient character, when it becomes conscious of itself as only one among *other* cultures and languages" (1981: 370). Certainly the Museum, particularly its contemporary, globalized incarnation, is the fulfilment of such a self-conscious transculturalism.

No longer confined to 'single' texts to be 'discovered' by knowing readers, intertextuality in the Museum is made commonplace. In a certain sense, intertextuality *implies* the Museum, and vice versa; each one facilitates the other. It is mechanical reproduction that permits us the ease with which texts come into contact with each other in the Museum, while it is the inherent intertextuality of all texts that gives us the new perception of a broad artistic domain. It is the universal culture of art that dramatically proves the impossibility of a self-sufficient text, while intertextual connections expand the unexpected relations forged by the Museum. The two concepts are so intertwined and interrelated that their combination almost seems inevitable. Thus, the Museum elevates each concept to a higher plane. Whereas the Imaginary Museum was simply the realistic possibility of a universal art culture based on the reproduction of all artwork, the (realized, material) Museum presupposes this universal vision and its works are created within its boundless interrelations and intersections. Likewise, while intertextuality seeks to deconstruct a text's inherent debt to other texts, the Museum takes such connections for granted, employing the limitless possibilities intertextuality brings. The Museum is the explicit rendering of the Imaginary Musem and its inherent intertextuality.

The plethora of foundational concepts Bakhtin developed for the theory of intertextuality – including dialogism, heterglossia, polyphony, double-voiced discourse, social text, hybridization, and re-accentuation – would remain largely ignored until Julia Kristeva introduced

them to the French intellectual scene in the 1960s. Roland Barthes would aid her in this refinement and expansion of Bakhtinian thought, and the translations of their work into English in the decades following would allow the subsequent proliferation of intertextual theory in its many structuralist, post-structuralist, and postmodernist incarnations. As stated previously, I wish to bypass, for the most part, the many murky modifications that have arisen in the wake of intertextuality's establishment.[6] Instead, I wish to retain the core tenets of the Bakhtin-Kristeva-Barthes lineage of intertextuality, the ambiguity and ambivalence of which is essential to its wide-ranging applicability.

Along with her popularization of the term intertextuality, Kristeva also transformed Bakhtin's ideas, a result of her unique Marxist-psychoanalytic perspective and her politically-motivated attack on the stabilization of language. Reacting to what she and the *Tel Quel* group saw as the commodification of knowledge and language – "communication is *merchandise*" (Barthes 1986: 170) – Kristeva would establish *semianalysis*, a new mode of semiotics which stressed the text as a site of constant production, rather than mere product. It was not just the text that was 'in process,' but also the subject, the author, the reader, and the critic that contributed to this process of continual production: "the new semiotic models then turn to the *social text*, to those social practices of which 'literature' is only one unvalorized variant, in order to conceive of them as so many ongoing transformations and/or productions" (Kristeva 1986: 87). The text, then, is a *practice* and a *productivity*; it should be viewed as "a compilation of cultural textuality" (Allen 36). To Kristeva, as it was to Bakhtin before her, the text is a site of constant struggle.

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[6] A strictly structuralist approach, for example, such as the categorical taxonomies offered by Gérard Genette (1997), is of no interest to me, as attempts to clarify or classify the inherently and intentionally ambiguous aura of intertextuality are a disservice to the spirit of its dialogism.

Of particular interest for the conception of the Museum is Kristeva's concrete spatialization of this textual struggle, further refining the parameters of intersection. Converting Bakhtin's two axes of the word's status – *dialogue* and *ambivalence* – into a horizontal and vertical axis, Kristeva aims to define "the spatial conception of language's poetic operation… the three dimensions of textual space where various semic sets and poetic sequences function" (1980: 65). The three dimensions or coordinates of dialogue she identifies are writing subject, addressee, and exterior texts, which interact *horizontally* (the textual word belongs to both writing subject and addressee) and *vertically* (the textual word oscillates within its social context). The result is "horizontal axis (subject-addresse) and vertical axis (text-context) coincide, bringing to light an important fact: each word is an intersection of words where at least one other word can be read" (66). This spatial intersection leads to Kristeva's much-quoted 'definition' of intertextuality: "any text is constructed as a mosaic of quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another. The notion of *intertextuality* replaces that of intersubjectivity, and poetic language is read as at least *double*" (66). Kristeva uses this spatialization of the word to theorize semiotic relationships of language and psychoanalytic fissures in subjectivity, but we can pause here, at the spatial conception of language, to expand upon the conception of intertextuality.

For Kristeva, as it was for Bakhtin before her, intertextuality is a literary phenomenon. Dostoyevsky is Bakhtin's primary inspiration for heteroglossia, while Joyce, Proust, and Kafka mark the beginning of self-consciously intertextual literature for Kristeva. As engrossed in written language as they were, unfortunately neither of them would explicitly apply their ideas to musical or visual language. Once intertextuality is considered inherent to every artistic medium, as it surely is, then the possibility for intertextual relationships opens up not just between texts of

a single medium, but among *all* mediums. It is, after all, just as easy to consciously or unconsciously reference a painting or a piece of music as it is literature. Inter*mediality*, then, expands the possible contents of the mosaic to include the multitude of artistic mediums. And as we witnessed in the previous chapter, neo-aesthetics now avows the status of artistic medium to a wide variety of media: comic books, video games, anime, etc. A further distinction can be made between *internal* intertextuality (a quotation within a text of another text of the same medium) and intermediality (a quotation within a text of another text of a different medium: a cinematic scene featuring a jukebox, for example), and *external* intermediality (the relation between transmedial texts, such as the many products comprising *The Matrix* franchise). Branded entertainment products, and franchises in particular, typically utilize all three of these forms of intertextuality/intermediality, forming a network of textual relations, not just a meeting point.

The prefix *inter-*, then, is no longer an appropriate prefix upon consideration of the current incarnation of textual relations, to be elaborated upon in the following chapter. From the Latin for "between, among, amid, in between, in the midst" ("Inter-"), inter- suggests a singular juncture, an 'intersection' as Kristeva writes. It is a linear, two-dimensional term unfit for the kind of media that dominates contemporary popular culture, and which this project will be exploring. *Poly-*, on the other hand, from the Ancient Greek for 'many, much' ("Poly-"), is a prefix that captures the full extent of the multitudinous nature of textual relations. A rather simple step, then, we can use polytextualism as an umbrella term that includes both intertextual and intermedial relations. It is not merely the interplay of texts that defines art in the Museum, but the sheer volume of networked texts that is its defining characteristic.

We will further refine this concept of polytextuality in Chapter Seven, when its central component will be theorized: the textwork. However, we must first make a detour into the

convoluted labyrinth of the conglomerated cultural industries in order to finalize the theoretical

construction of the Museum. Kristeva's horizontal and vertical dimensions of language are to

find unlikely bedfellows here: horizontal and vertical integration. In a development Kristeva

would most certainly find problematic, intertextuality and the social text – and within it, the

reader's production of meaning so encouraged by Kristeva – is to receive a massive corporate

investment in the late twentieth century. Malraux drew up the plans for the Museum and the

post-structuralists would design its layout; it is the corporate cultural industries that finance the

transformation of the Imaginary Museum into the material consumer experience of the Museum.

CHAPTER 5: THE CULTURAL ECONOMY OF CORPORATE CONGLOMERATION

Bakhtin's work on intertextuality is a result of, and response to, the post-Revolutionary Russia of the 1920s and 1930s, just as Kristeva's is to late 1960s Paris; we need to situate our discussion of polytextuality within the historical and social specificities of Western society at the turn of the new century. The third and final step in mapping the geography of the Museum is to identify how the dense web of corporate conglomeration, which is responsible for the production of the vast majority of our contemporary cultural production, fulfills the theoretical promises made by Malraux, Bakhtin and Kristeva. Synergy – the vertical, horizontal, and multi-sector integration so greatly desired by corporate conglomerates – is the corporate logic underscoring the material manifestation of the Museum.

Cultural production and consumption is generally accepted to have greatly accelerated – if not substantially transformed – since the 1980s, particularly in Western society. A variety of economic, political, technological, and cultural forces have driven this change, among them globalization, digitalization, deregulation, marketization, conglomeration, integration, and convergence. While none of these forces are distinctly 'new' developments, the increasing degree to which they have accelerated in the last three decades certainly marks a sea change. The result has been an unrelenting commodification of culture across the world, and a much larger financial portion of the global economy allotted to the cultural industries. However, as Hesmondhalgh demonstrates in his comprehensive and impressive survey of *The Cultural Industries* (2007), there are long-term historical currents in economics, politics and culture that have led us to our current cultural configuration, as well as a multitude of academic approaches to analyze such a complex field of study.

The industrialization and commercialization of capitalist culture received its first major treatise with Adorno and Horkheimer's seminal work, *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1944). The term 'Culture Industry,' referring to the commodification of art and the collapse of the distinction between Industry and Culture, was conceived of by Adorno and Horkheimer – and amplified by their colleagues at the Frankfurt School – in order to evoke shocking parallels between American capitalist democracy and Nazi Germany. The polemical, generalizing, and overtly elitist nature of this argument was countered by the Birmingham School's response, which emphasized reciprocity in culture and agency on part of the 'consumer,' particularly Stuart Hall's influential encoding/decoding model. In the intervening years since this 'foundational' culture studies moment, the idea of the Culture Industry has been given considerably more nuance, leading to a more pluralist conception – summarized and embodied by Hesmondhalgh – that "argue[s] for a view of the cultural industries and the texts they produce as complex, ambivalent and contested" (4). Hesmondhalgh traces a shift from Culture Industry, to a less monolithic 'culture industry,' to a variable 'cultural industries.'

Such a diffuse terrain is the result of a long history of various academic approaches, each of which contains its own internal divisions and debates: traditional media and cultural economics, liberal-pluralist communication studies, sociology of culture, radical media sociology, political economy, cultural studies, etc. In his overview of these various disciplines, Hesmondhalgh mentions the burgeoning field of 'cultural economy,' and suggests that there "is still, at the time of writing, too little of such work to constitute a distinctive approach to the cultural industries" (43). Part of my aim with this thesis is to remedy this perceived lack, as my title helps demonstrate.

Cultural economy, according to Paul du Gay and Michael Pryke in their edited collection,

Cultural Economy: Cultural Analysis and Commercial Life (2002), is a response, in part, to the

so-called 'cultural turn,' in which there has been a renewed interest in all things 'cultural' from

both the practical, organizational standpoint (increased significance in economic sphere on

'creativity,' tailored service, 'lifestyle' marketing, 'corporate culturalism,' networking, etc.), as

well as the perspective of the social sciences (in which there has been enhanced emphasis

pertaining to the economy's cultural construction and framing). Analagous to this development

is the continued discourse centering on the binary divide of 'culture' and 'economy,' reductively

pitting political economy 'against' cultural studies. Cultural economy can thus be perceived as

an attempt to transcend this exhausted debate, as well as complicate and problematize the

epochal claims of 'increased culturalization.'

Approaching cultural economy, as outlined by du Gay and Pryke, is an inherently

contradictory, two-fold process:

> ...either as a means of exploring the ways in which economic and organizational life is
> built up, or assembled from, a range of disparate, but inherently cultural, parts, or as a
> series of claims concerning the extent to which economic and organizational relations in
> the present are more thoroughly 'culturalized' than their historical predecessors. More
> often than not they end up, either explicitly or implicitly, developing both strands at the
> same time. (12)

This methodology would be further refined in Pryke's establishment, along with Tony Bennett

and Liz McFall, of the *Journal of Cultural Economy*. Their inaugural editorial, entitled

"Culture/economy/social" (2008), seeks to curtail potential misunderstandings of the term.

Cultural economy does not refer to '*the* cultural economy,' a distinctive economic realm

championed by advocates of 'the knowledge economy' and the 'creative industries,' nor does it

refer to understanding economic practices and relationships as merely culturally constructed, or

in opposition to each other. Rather, the scope of cultural economy is a "broad umbrella... not

easily paired with academic specialisms," operating on a canvas of "broader debates... in which the main conceptual divisions on which the social and cultural sciences have been premised are now clearly no longer viable" (3). Traversing beyond even the dissolution of the binary of culture and economy, one of the primary objectives of cultural economy is that culture "be put into a new place where it is the nature, character and operation of its relationship with other entities – be they social, natural, economic, or technical – that is at stake" (2). Interdisciplinary by default and confrontational in spirit, cultural economy is an appropriate methodology to define the structure of the Museum.

As mentioned previously, Hesmondhalgh provides an extensive history of the cultural, economic, and political forces that have come to shape the current configuration of the cultural industries; he explicitly states that his "argument is that cultural production and consumption haven't changed quite as much as some commentators would have us believe" (xiii). Similarly, the formation of the Museum I am tracing is reliant on the injection of historical trajectories back into contemporary developments that, without the resuscitation of seemingly forgotten ideas, may seem entirely novel, or epochal. Rather, it can be shown that certain pivotal cultural economic advancements not only have distinct historical antecedents – in this case Malraux's Imaginary Museum and Bakhtin-Kristeva's intertextuality – but are in fact fulfillments of these aesthetic and linguistic 'prophesies.'

As much as Malraux was describing developments occurring in his contemporary art world, the Museum Without Walls was looking toward the future of art, particularly the critical role of mechanical and photographic reproduction. The Internet's profuse circulation of reproduced art is a quite literal fulfillment of the Imaginary Museum. Likewise, Bakhtin and Kristeva, in analyzing the heteroglossia and intertextuality of the modern novel, must have had

an eye toward the proliferation of collage, reference, and other overtly intertextual processes that were gaining momentum at the time. One can only imagine what they would make of hypertext and the fundamentally intertextual core of the Internet. Perhaps most disillusioning to Malraux, Bakhtin, and Kristeva, however, would be the fact that the true realization of their progressive ideals would come in the form of transnational mega-corporations. The corporate logic of the cultural industries has delivered on four promises required for the Museum's transformation into consumable reality: conglomeration, integration, networking, and convergence.

The central development of the cultural industries in the last half century is the matter of corporate conglomeration, to which Hesmondhalgh's chapter subtitle summarizes succinctly: "the big get bigger" (160). Following a general trend in business towards diversification beginning in the 1940s, conglomeration in the cultural industries spread rapidly during the 1960s and exploded from the 1980s onwards; large corporations intensified their market domination with an unending series of mergers and acquisitions, forming increasingly tighter oligopolies. Neo-liberal economic policy with an emphasis on deregulation is the key factor here, particularly the global proliferation of this policy through the GATT (General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade) and WTO (World Trade Organization), but this history of mass media conglomeration is well-rehearsed,[7] as is the concern for social justice, equality, and the health of the public sphere that accompanies such documentation of media concentration. What is not generally considered in such accounts, however, is the impact of conglomeration perceivable *within* actual cultural production, rather than merely its overarching effect on society and democracy from a political economic perspective. This *aversion to interpretation* from the current literature about the cultural industries will be a recurring motif.

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[7] Ben H. Bagdikian's continually updated *The New Media Monopoly* (2004), now in its seventh edition, is a valuable, if polemic, overview. William M. Kunz's *Culture Conglomerates: Consolidation in the Motion Picture and Television Industries* (2007) delivers a deeper history and analysis of two specific industries.

The result of conglomeration on the cultural industries is a configuration in which seven

vast, transnational mega-corporations have come to dominate the media industry – the illustrious

Big Seven: Time Warner, Walt Disney, Viacom, News Corporation, Bertelsmann, Sony, and

NBC Universal. The exact market ranking, even the names of said companies,[8] may change

from time to time, but the firm establishment of an oligopoly is assured. No longer content with

dominance in a single medium, the Big Seven have major holdings in all the major media, from

newspaper, magazine, and book publishers to film, television, radio, and digital game

production. Similar to the characteristics of a cartel, these firms co-operate more than they

compete: they have similar boards of directors, with dozens of 'interlocking' members that sit on

the boards of so-called 'competitors'; they jointly invest in shared interests and ventures; they

lend each other capital and transfer properties when mutually advantageous; and they all belong

and contribute to organizations that lobby government on their behalf, such as the NAB

(National Association of Broadcasters), the MPAA (Motion Picture Association of America),

and the RIAA (Recording Industry Association of America). To use just one of many possible

examples of such 'alliance capitalism' (Castells 1996: 162-4), Channel [V], the brand name for

multiple international music television networks, is a joint operation between Time Warner,

Bertelsmann, News Corporation, Sony, and EMI (one of the Big Four record companies). In the

face of such concentrated ownership and 'co-opetition' (Murdock 2000: 48), it is no wonder

some commentators resort to hyperbole; the media conglomerates, according to Bagdikian, have

"more communications power than was exercised by any despot or dictatorship in history" (3).

Hesmondhalgh reminds us that focusing primarily on these elite conglomerates can

distract attention from the significance of other important players in the media industry,

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[8] Time Warner, as it is currently known at the time of writing, has changed titles often in its 85 year history, from *Time* magazine, to Time, Incorporated, to Time Warner, to AOL Time Warner in the world's largest merger in 2000, and then back again to simply Time Warner in 2003.

particularly in other parts of the world where American domination is not as complete.[9] Below these seven giants sit a 'second tier' (Herman and McChesney, 1997: 53) of companies, dozens of mostly regional giants that are not nearly as expansive or diversified as the elite. Clear Channel Communications, for example, may not earn nearly as much as Time Warner, but its utter dominance over the U.S. radio market demonstrates its significance (Hesmondhalgh 164). Furthermore, even as such massive corporations increasingly control the industry, small companies continue to multiply and prosper in the third tier of cultural production and circulation. Hesmondhalgh points to a variety of factors for the continuing prevalence of small media companies, such as the relatively autonomous conception stage of texts, the onset of new media technologies, the rising discourse of entrepreneurialism, and the increased availability of venture capital (174-175), but to speak of these companies as 'independent' would deny the deeply inter-dependent role these companies have with the mega-corporations from which they secure subcontracts. There exists a complex network of licensing, financing, and circulation between the three tiers, atop which sit seven powerful behemoths.

An outcome of utmost importance that developed out of this increasing conglomeration is that large, transnational companies are no longer simply buying into the cultural industries, but building a portfolio of related firms within the cultural industries, a strategy that goes by many names, including integration, synergy, or tight diversification. Synergy – a term originating from medical practice in which two elements working together might produce a result greater than the two parts on their own – was applied to business in the 1970s and 1980s, and conglomerates in the cultural industries pursued it with a strategy of cross-promotion and cross-selling. A key element to achieving this synergy is integration, which comes in many forms.

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[9] Or in the case of Canada, which is largely dominated by American popular culture for the most part, but also has an even tighter oligopoly in its news and broadcast media: CTVglobemedia, Canwest Global, Rogers, and Shaw dominate, while Astral, Newcap and Quebecor also compete.

Horizontal integration is when a conglomerate buys companies in the same sector, effectively reducing competition; every member of the Big Seven has and continues to engage in voracious horizontal integration, resulting in their conglomerational configuration. *Vertical integration* is the most tactical, and potentially pernicious, form of synergy. It occurs when a conglomerate buys companies that make up different stages of the production and circulation process, either 'downstream,' when a production company buys into distribution (such as News Corporation buying DirectTV, a satellite provider, to broadcast its Fox programming), or 'upstream,' when a distributor or manufacturer buys into content production (such as Sony buying CBS Records). *Multisector integration* is another key component, and refers to when a conglomerate buys into a related industry, such as a movie distributor buying a book publisher, which can then produce a cross-promotional novelization. *Extension* is the exploitation of this multisector integration, referring to the strategy of expansion of potential markets by moving content across different delivery systems, producing multiple revenue streams. Finally, *franchise* refers to the coordinated effort to brand and market content within and among these forms of integration. Of course, all of these forms of integration are pursued at once, both within conglomerates and between 'competing' conglomerates, resulting in a synergistic stew and inter-conglomerational feeding frenzy.

The highest profile case of synergy – as well as the largest corporate merger in history – was AOL's acquisition of Time Warner in 2000, leading to the formation of AOL Time Warner. On paper, this merger was the perfect fit: Time Warner's extensive quantity of media product could be distributed through AOL's then-dominance of the internet market. In a clear case of over-reach into a still developing market (AOL's prominence and profitability would soon plummet), Time Warner, saddled with immense debt, would drop the AOL moniker from its

name, and the deal is now generally regarded as a tremendous failure. However, Time Warner is still the largest player in the Big Seven by a far margin, and perceiving this misstep as evidence of a movement away from vertical integration would be incorrect. While there are many examples of companies selling off particular firms to re-focus on a narrower portion of the cultural industries, the over-arching trend of the media oligopoly is a quest for control and domination through the various forms of integration outlined above. Whether that be horizontal, vertical, or multi-sector integration within a conglomerate, or through alliances that integrate two or more conglomerates together in shared ventures, the current configuration of the cultural industries is most accurately viewed as a conglomerate of conglomerates, increasingly tightening its grip on the immense web of cultural production and circulation.

The potentially disastrous effect of such an outcome on the public sphere is, as previously mentioned, a common (and warranted) grievance, most notably maintained by political economists such as Noam Chomsky and Robert McChesney. If we take a step back, however, we can see this configuration as indicative of a larger development: the shift towards an interdependent global system of networked forces. Or, as Manuel Castells would prophesize and label it: *The Rise of the Network Society*. The three volume opus – *The Rise of the Network Society* (1996), *The Power of Identity* (1997), and *End of Millennium* (1997) – that comprises Castells' *The Information Age: Economy, Society and Culture* has been rightly criticized for its technological determinism[10] or reductionism, as it largely credits the epochal shift of the network society to the 'information technology revolution.' Regardless, there is a reason why Castells is the foremost cited communication scholar in the world: *The Information Age* is the most comprehensive vision of our passing from the industrial age into the informational. It also

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[10] Castells does himself no favours in claiming that "the dilemma of technological determinism is probably a false problem, since technology *is* society, and society cannot be understood or represented without its technological tools" (5).

provides a way of analyzing the cultural industries without resorting to the same old doom-and-gloom political economy account.

The information society, as Castells and others perceive it, has an eye toward the more complex networks and alliances that drive the global economy; the cultural industries should provide a unique point of departure, for they work to produce and reproduce this informational society just as much as they are themselves a product of the informational age. One of Castells' key insights, one that challenges the political economic account we have found lacking, is that "the powers that are in the media networks take second place to the power of flows embodied in the structure and language of these networks" (476). In essence, more power is found in the form of the network itself than in its individual components. The Big Seven, in spite of their consolidated power and cartel characteristics, can be seen as mere nodal points in the overarching network of the Cultural Industrial Complex.

Various critics interpret Castells' futurology as a proclamation of "homogenization-through-convergence" (Hesmondhalgh 275), but I think Castells' writing can be seen here as a spiritual brethren to Malraux's fanciful writing on the aesthetics of art. Consciously or not, Castells is evoking the Museum: "Every cultural expression, from the worst to the best, from the most elitist to the most popular, comes together in this digital universe that links up in a giant, a historical supertext, past, present, and future manifestations of the communicative mind. By so doing, they construct a new symbolic environment" (403). Putting aside his over-emphasis on 'new media' and his ineffectual discussion of virtuality, Castells' information-driven 'new symbolic environment' is the e-Museum; the 'supertext' is the fulfillment of Bakhtinian-Kristevan intertextuality. The Museum – conglomerated and integrated – is now networked as well.

Despite it being the least developed of his chapters, and an unfortunate victim of pre-dot-com crash techno-utopianism, Castells' 'The culture of real virtuality' points toward the final fulfillment of the Museum: convergence. Labelling it 'The Grand Fusion,' Castells identifies "a new electronic communication system... formed out of the merger of globalized, customized mass media and computer-mediated communication... characterized by the integration of different media and by its interactive potential" (364). Concerning the structure of the 'multimedia world,' this system of communication "induces an *integration of all messages in a common cognitive pattern*" (371; original emphasis). Educational programs that are played as video games, popular music that is constructed for MTV, trials that are broadcast as soap operas, sports games that are choreographed as action movies – the blurring of contents is a continually escalating phenomenon.

The term 'grand fusion,' however, evokes visions of a monolithic culture, in which all cultural production is assimilating towards the same end. Instead, borrowing a phrase from Donnelly (2005), I find the term 'genetic fusion' more fitting. While Donnelly identifies the genetic fusion developing between popular music and film in "Soundtracks Without Films," the idea can be reasonably applied to the cultural industries writ large. Just as soundtracks without films do not omit the possibility of there still existing 'singular' films and soundtracks, as there no doubt still is and will be for some time, the genetic fusion of the cultural industries still allows for these lone works, but suggests that the increasing amount of 'shared genetic material' in and among the cultural industries is leading toward more 'mutations' and 'hybrids' than 'pure-breeds.' The 'grand fusion' model would seem to indicate otherwise, with its gesturing towards some all-encompassing, monolithic multimedia mutant.

In the intervening years since Castells' provocative opus, from the burst of the dot-com bubble to the 'millenial generation,' the word 'convergence' has received considerable attention in the popular media and academia alike, perhaps none more influential than Henry Jenkins. While the genetic fusion of the cultural industries is a content-based phenomena, to be perceived within cultural texts, convergence, according to Jenkins' *Convergence Culture* (2006), is not just a technological process, but a direct incorporation of the consumer and audience experience: "the flow of content across multiple media platforms, the cooperation between multiple media industries, and the migratory behavior of media audiences who will go almost anywhere in search of the kinds of entertainment experiences they want" (2). Rather than the digital revolution paradigm – to which Castells would most certainly belong – that presumed new media would push aside old media, the convergence paradigm sees old and new media, as well as producer and consumer, collide and interact in increasingly complex ways; convergence is an unending process, not an endpoint.

By using specific cultural examples, particularly how they flourish, transform, and circulate online and across different forms, Jenkins is able to deliver a series of insightful ideas, including collective intelligence and 'affective economics.' For cultural economists, he isolates a key tension between seemingly contradictory trends: new media technologies allow consumers to take media into their own hands, affordably producing and distributing content themselves, while at the same time there exists a tightening concentration of ownership of the cultural industries, as discussed above. And in further proof of the genetic fusion of the cultural industries, Jenkins isolates a central narrative technique on display in the Museum: transmedia storytelling.

With a lucid and comprehensive analysis of the *Matrix* franchise, Jenkins does not give primacy to the trilogy of films over its 'ancillary' forms, but considers it in all its incarnations, including comic book, soundtrack, anime, DVD feature, short story, website, commercial tie-in, merchandise, interpretative criticism, fan reenactments, video game, and massively multiplayer online role-playing game.[11] For Jenkins, "*The Matrix* is entertainment for the age of media convergence, integrating multiple texts to create a narrative so large that it cannot be contained within a single medium… with each text making a distinctive and valuable contribution to the whole" (95-6). Attracting different market niches with different forms and products, the Wachowski Brothers exploited the integration and synergy opportunities of its production company Warner Brothers, subsidiary of Time Warner. Jenkins makes the intriguing point – in considering the franchise's reception (particularly the weak response to the sequels) – that we do not yet have the aesthetic criteria for evaluating texts that are experienced across multiple media. With more and more "co-creation" (companies producing different forms of same franchise collaborate, rather than just license away) and "multiplatform entertainment," we will need to develop this aesthetic criteria fast; the Museum produces and displays art that we are not used to evaluating from traditional aesthetic viewpoints. At this point, we can turn to just such an aesthetic methodology, and consider the Museum's content, or display: the textwork.

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[11] Considering his interest in fan communities, Jenkins would probably be thrilled by the advent of the *Matrixicism* religion.

SECTION II - THE DISPLAY OF THE MUSEUM

CHAPTER 6: INTRODUCTION

Because the Museum is predicated on multiplicity and network effects, it should be no surprise that the contents of such a polytextual configuration would be equally diffuse. The difficulty in comprehending this 'slippery' new artistic production and circulation can perhaps be overcome with the help of Kristeva's post-structuralist partner in crime, Roland Barthes. In *S/Z*, his lengthy dissection of Balzac's short story *Sarrasine*, Barthes approaches the multiple possible meanings of the text by "cut[ting it] up into a series of brief, contiguous fragments, which we shall call *lexias*, since they are units of reading" (13). Seemingly a very rigid, structuralist practice, Barthes actually breaks down the text so rigorously, in appropriate post-structuralist fashion, that he reveals the necessarily incomplete outcome of such a process. "The lexia is only the wrapping of a semantic volume," Barthes explains, "the crest line of the plural text, arranged like a beam of possible (but controlled, attested to by a systematic reading) meanings under the flux of discourse: the lexia and its units will thereby form a kind of polyhedron faceted by the word, the group of words, the sentence or the paragraph" (14). By detonating and releasing the multiplicity of meanings, Barthes' cutting of the text into lexias exposes its intertextual core, woven as it is from the threads of the social text. Likewise, we can isolate lexias in the Museum in order to further reveal the cultural economic logic of polytextuality.

Lexias in the Museum, however, are not limited to a word, a phrase, or a small group of sentences as they were to Barthes. Rather, the vast, limitless expanse of the Museum necessitates a very relative view of the lexia: it might be as small as a single image, but it might

also be as large as a corporation. Even a transnational conglomerate is now but a nodal point in a boundless system, so our lexias must be elastic and mobile. In Section I, we witnessed the philosophic birth and design of the Museum, along with its corporate construction. In Section II, we will explore the Display of such a Museum, traversing the expanse of possible lexia, starting from the smallest possible unit of measurement and working up to the largest. Chapter Eight will evaluate literal embodiments of the Museum, both real and on-screen, allowing us to witness the explicit polytextuality of single frames and scenes, along with their possible interpretation of meaning within the paradigm of the Museum. Moving to a broader exploration of intermedial genre, Chapter Nine will see our lexia moving at great speed among disparate, even unthinkably related forms, illustrating the dispersion of structure. And finally, Chapter Ten will tackle a corporate behemoth: General Electric, the world's largest conglomerate. The true expanse and reach of the Museum will be rendered visible, as the issue of power within the Museum will be broached. But first, with the aid of Barthes, we must redefine the content of these lexias, and pinpoint what exactly it is that we are measuring: the textwork.

CHAPTER 7: 'FROM WORK TO TEXT' TO *TEXTWORK*

For all his lofty talk of deconstruction, dialogism, and the ultimate instability of meaning, Barthes is quite content to break complex concepts down into simple binaries: doxa versus para-doxa, readerly versus writerly, author versus scriptor, criticism versus textual analysis, text of pleasure versus text of bliss, work versus text.[12] The inevitable outcome of binary logic – one side is inherently privileged over the other – is evident here: Barthes favours the latter figure of each binary in this list. Doxa, readerly, author, criticism, pleasure, and the work are associated with ideology, monologism, stability, the Law, and so on, while para-doxa, writerly, scriptor, textual analysis, bliss, and the text are allied with subversion, dialogism, disruption, and agency. Barthes was fully aware of the folly of just such a structuralist dichotomy, and he would be the first to question any such reductive reasoning. Considering Barthes' personal politics at the time, as well as those of *Tel Quel*, it is not hard to understand why he would enact such an initial privileging in favour of instability and subversion, or why he would eventually refine these distinctions into a more subjective rendering in later works. Even in such later works, however, Barthes still relies on binary language (such as *stadium* and *punctum* in *Camera Lucida*), even as he works to break them down, noting the inevitable collapse between such distinctions.

Nevertheless, Barthes is fashioning language and specific terms that do not do justice to the sophisticated grammatical system he is proposing. This reductive labelling is justifiable in light of the complexity of the ideas Barthes and his colleagues were seeking to disseminate at the time – binaries, after all, are a fine starting point from which to orient a discourse – but the

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[12] Not to mention all of his (and others') semiological binaries: denotation/connotation, langue/parole, signifier/signified, syntagmatic/paradigmatic, synchrony/diachrony.

resulting terms Barthes established are a disservice to the spirit of his multifaceted philosophy. It

is not the content of Barthes' message that needs refinement, then, but its grammar: the

terminology, the usage, and the syntax. Barthes himself pointed toward the network as a

metaphor for the structure of the text; we would we be wise to treat his own work as just such a

network. It is not the specific binary distinctions and definitions – or nodal points to use the

language of the network – that are to be explored, but the vast array of linkages and connections

that they open up.

Before Barthes reworked the terms, in traditional terminology the *text* was closely tied to

manuscript studies and stood for the completed, stabilizing, material version of a literary *work*.

Barthes reverses this dichotomy in an effort to challenge the stabilizing logic of Saussurean

linguistics and structuralism, as well as the subservient position of writing to speech. Returning

to the etymological root of the word text – a tissue, a woven fabric – Barthes opens up the

explosive and disruptive force of writing, as well as its playfulness and infinitude, by exploring

"…what might be called the *stereographic plurality* of its weave of signifiers… The reader of

the Text may be compared to someone at a loose end" (1977: 159; original emphasis). Not

merely plural in the sense of having many meanings, the text achieves "the very plural of

meaning" (1977: 159). Subsequently, for Barthes, *work* now indicates the material book,

capable of meaning, closure and interpretation, while *text* designates the radical play of the

signifier, the pluralist explosion that places onus on the Reader rather than the Author.

Necessarily connected to a theory of intertextuality, the text is seen as a product of a

larger system at play; *product*, *system*, and *play* entail double meanings in this context. "The

work is a fragment of substance, occupying a part of the spaces of books (in a library for

example)," according to Barthes, while "the Text is a methodological field" (1977: 156-7). In

using the term field, Barthes is indicating a spatial dimension to this configuration of the text, a physicality and materiality that differentiates text from work: "the work can be seen (in bookshops, in catalogues, in exam syllabuses), the text is a process of demonstration, is spoken according to certain rules (or against certain rules); the work can be held in the hand, the text is held in language" (157). Language here evokes a larger *system*, one in which the *play* of the written word is an active *production*. The intertextual system of the text operates in constant process between its various elements; we might consider applying such an approach to the very distinction between text and work.

Section I demonstrates why Barthes' binary approach is no longer adequate; how could we make such clear-cut distinctions in the midst of a swarm of polytextual products, mediums, and forms? Instead, what if we accepted Barthes' distinction, but in applying it as a methodology for (poly)textual analysis, we simultaneously used both text *and* work? Whereas Barthes would have us denote work as merely the material, stabilizing opposite to the plural, unstabilizing text, it is more appropriate – particularly considering the type of explicitly polytextual work so prominently produced by the corporate cultural industries – to look at the *textwork*. Conflating the two terms is not meant as a simple dialectical process of synthesis between text and work, signalling a concrete new product/term. Rather, the textwork is a continual, dialogical process enacted between both the text and the work, the result of which will be shown to give alternate meanings to the original terms, now modified, expanded and rendered appropriately paradoxical. Most importantly, the textwork portmanteau has the fortunate benefit of bearing a phonetic similarity to *network*, the structure of which the textwork is predicated upon.

We can delineate the textwork as three two-sided elements occurring all at once: *text*, in both its Barthesian destabilizing, literary incarnation and its broader semiotic designation as a sign; *work*, in its embodiment of both the Barthesian monologic, stabilizing piece of literature, as well as its economic meaning as labour and production; and *network*, in its gesture toward complex, interrelated connection, but also its partitioning capability of redefining concrete – albeit fragmented and disjointed – new textual limitations. We might envision the textwork as a sort of six-sided die; it consists of six uniquely differentiated elements, any of which may appear at the forefront during a roll of the dice. Nevertheless, they are all of one interrelated game, one cohesive system of polytextual relation. In the following, the six elements of the textwork will be outlined, in turn: both dimensions of the text, both dimensions of the work, and both dimensions of the network.

First, we have *text* in the Barthesian incarnation that he has defined in contrary relation to the work, as discussed above. A continual contemplation throughout his oeuvre, the theory of the text looms large in much of Barthes' work, but most notably *S/Z*, *The Pleasure of the Text*, "From Work to Text," and "The Death of the Author" (both of which are available in *Image, Music, Text*). Perhaps his most famous work, as well as a core tenet of intertextual theory, "The Death of the Author" reveals the capitalist ideology inherent in the Romantic, naturalist ideal of the Author. Barthes attacks the classical notion of filiation, this over-investment in "the 'person' of the author," specifically the idea that "the *explanation* of a work is always sought in the man or woman who produced it, as if it were... the voice of a single person, the *author* 'confiding' in us" (1977: 146; original emphasis). In order to tear down this 'Author-God,' as well as the monological *work* that he or she fosters, Barthes presents the *scriptor*, "born simultaneously with the text" (145). The word scriptor is mentioned again only once, for Barthes' real focus is the

text that unleashes the Reader; the polemic charge of the essay is encapsulated in its final

proclamation: "the birth of the reader must be at the cost of the death of the Author" (148).

That same year (1968), Foucault also published a challenge to the status of the author, "What is

an Author?", and the two would begin a debate that continues to rage on in ivory towers across

the globe, still to this day. For our purposes, however, we can concentrate on what Barthes gives

birth to, rather than what he proclaims dead:

> We know now that a text is not a line of words releasing a single 'theological' meaning (the 'message' of the Author-God) but a multi-dimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash. The text is a tissue of quotations drawn from the innumerable centres of culture. (1977: 146)

Whenever Barthes is talking about *text*, he is talking about intertextuality, and vice versa.

Picking up where Kristeva-via-Bakhtin left off, there is no discourse concerning the text without

the admission of radical dispersal and regeneration:

> *Text* means *Tissue*; but whereas hitherto we have always taken this tissue as a product, a ready-made veil, behind which lies, more or less hidden, meaning (truth), we are now emphasizing, in the tissue, the generative idea that the text is made, is worked out in a perpetual interweaving; lost in this tissue – this texture – the subject unmakes himself, like a spider dissolving in the constructive secretions of its web. (1975: 64)

Again we witness a spatial configuration; in this case, the metaphor of the web is used, one

which has since, with the advent of networked information communication technology, taken on

a very literal meaning, to which we will of course return.

In opposition to Barthes' conception of the text, on the other hand, is the ever-broadening

generalized usage of the term within literary theory and, subsequently, within cultural studies.

Analagous to the expanding conception of what constitutes 'art,' as discussed in the previous

chapters, the 'text' as a unit of study has extended well beyond the traditional Western canon of

literature. The text first expanded to include popular fiction, film, and music, as it did in the

Museum; now it is not uncommon to see the term utilized for advertising, video games, fashion,

comic books, and so on. Moving beyond 'art,' however defined, the 'text' as defined by cultural

studies can also comprise any artefact of culture, thereby including events, such as a film festival

or subcultural practice, as well as objects.[13] On one hand, then, we have the text as a specific

form of ground-breaking literature as advocated by Barthes; on the other, we have the cultural

studies version that is purposefully broad-ranging and openly applicable.

These two competing definitions of the term text may appear at odds with each other at

first glance, but juxtaposing the two definitions demonstrates how each term necessarily informs

the other. It is a simple step to retroactively apply the cultural studies version of text back on to

Barthes: as we have seen, literature is no longer the vanguard of textual theory, so it is no stretch

to consider the possibility of a comic book or a video game possessing these same pluralist and

dialogic qualities that Barthes attributes to the then-modern novel. But what about projecting the

Barthesian text forward into the contemporary function of the text? In many ways, the manner

of text isolated by Barthes, while innovative and rare at the time, is what now constitutes the

popular and the mainstream. Do the cultural industries not wish to produce exactly such an

open-ended plurality with its products? From a profit perspective, does the Barthesian text, with

its web of creation and collaboration by both author and reader, not allow for multiple revenue

streams and expanded consumption? A result of synergy and corporate integration, the

Barthesian text, rather than work, is what constitutes the vast majority of our mass culture. As

such, the broad-ranging cultural studies definition of text is merely the narrow Barthesian text of

literature applied en masse. With corporate sponsorship, the text is our cultural product of

choice.

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[13] Paul DuGay's *Doing Cultural Studies: The Case of the Sony Walkman*, for example, is appropriately indicative of
just such an object-focused approach.

The next two conflated elements of the textwork are *work*, in both its Barthesian literary form and its more general evocation of labour and process. As discussed above, Barthes places the text in opposition to the work, decrying its security and stability for its monologic, and in fact, ideological, implications. While I would claim that this type of monologic product is on the decline, as the synergistic cultural industries have seized upon the potentially profitable functions of the text, I would maintain that the work, as conceived by Barthes, still rears its stabilizing head in a variety of ways. An inevitable result of continual dispersal and diffusion in an instable information age, the urge to reaffirm the value of the monologic work is strong. A fetishization of the material product is one such effort; for instance, the value of the physical printed word and the vinyl record escalates in a rapidly digitizing world. Authenticity and scarcity become consumer priorities, and the fetishized work – the 'real' art – is re-elevated.

The continued elevation of the author functions in a similar way. Despite Barthes and Foucault's attacks, the status of the author is in no danger of being displaced. If anything, the 'author-function' has only increased in significance. We see it perhaps most prominently as a strategy of 'cutting through' the plethora of cultural works to which we are confronted. In an age of nearly limitless cultural production, ascribing lasting importance to a single name is a succinct strategy of management. It is also perhaps the simplest tactic of canonization; 'raising' the cultural importance of previously denied art forms such as comic books and video games has been accomplished in large part through the exaltation of distinguished figures like Art Spiegelman, author of the seminal graphic novel *Maus*, and Will Wright, lead developer of the innovative video games *SimCity*, *Sims*, and *Spore* (both of whom co-curated "KRAZY!", to be discussed in the subsequent chapter).

On a broader scale, we might see the 'celebrity-function' operating in a similar fashion. Especially as celebrity figures effortlessly move between various forms and mediums, celebrity is used by audiences as an anchor from which to orient their cultural consumption around. The result of such an author-focused strategy – an anchor in the intertextual ether – utilized by critics and audiences to different degrees, is to re-enshrine the status of the work. "To give a text an Author," Barthes reminds us, "is to impose a limit on that text, to furnish it with a final signified, to close the writing" (1977: 1467). Paradoxically (fittingly, of course), the radical plurality of the text can be seen to facilitate its opposite outcome: too much plurality requires the Author and the work to 'make sense' of increasing cultural complexity.

Another dimension to this re-exaltation of the work is academia itself. Often resorting to ever-narrowing specialization in the face of increasing complexity, many disciplines in the arts continue to rely on canonization, no matter the alternating configurations. In a counter-intuitive turn if there ever was one, the same issue of inter-related complexity that begs for wider perspectives is instead used to justify its opposite: the *need* for specialization. Because there is a glut of information available for even the tiniest or rarest of subject areas, becoming an expert on a narrowly-defined field is considered the only path towards contributing original knowledge to a field of study. Thus, the safety and convenience offered by a narrowly-focused topic of study is excused as rigorous specialization. The result of such a narrowing development on textual analysis is the further isolation of particular works, elevating their importance as singularities.

While the problem of traditional canons – be they Eurocentric, patriarchal, or otherwise – continues to exist as struggle and compromise, the problem of canonization itself continues to hamper our ability to study texts. By focusing on singular works in lieu of networked texts, cultural critics do a disservice to the cultural importance of texts by continually striving for

isolation and focus. Inevitable as it may be that certain works will be deemed more worthy of study than others, and that the study of said works will require increasingly focused constriction, there is no reason why an accompanying gesture towards a vaster, interrelated network of texts can not be made concurrently. It seems as if the lessons of post-structuralism and intertextuality learned from Barthes and Kristeva have been forgotten; now that the conglomerated cultural industries have made the networked text its primary product, it is high time we return to the insights afforded to us by intertextual theory.

In opposition to this narrow definition of the monologic work offered by Barthes, we can also consider its broader, contradictory incarnation, as we did with the text. From an economic standpoint, the work can be also be thought of in terms of labour and production, shifting the focus from 'product' to 'process.' When Kristeva and Barthes consider this element, they see it as a quality of the text, not the work. We can recall Kristeva's alternative mode of semiotics, *semianalysis*, which intended to subvert a capitalist ideology that promotes writing as a product to be quickly consumed and replaced, commodifying thought and knowledge. Semianalysis viewed texts as embedded in a continual state of *production*, or 'productivity,' rather than as mere consumable products. Stressing its own productive role in constructing an 'object' of study, semianalysis witnessed the subject, the author, the reader, and the critic join the text in a process of continual work and (re)production.

When mapping "From Work to Text," Barthes echoes this emphasis on production: "*the Text is experienced only in an activity of production*" (1977: 157). Kristeva and Barthes both saw literary Modernism as the original site of the self-conscious textual production that warranted such a semianalysis; these texts were presented not as monologic products, but as incomplete productions in which the reader was encouraged to produce meaning. Elsewhere,

Barthes sees 'work' as fundamental to the very act of reading itself, not just the reading of Modernist literary experiments. "To read," according to Barthes, "is a labor of language. To read is to find meanings, and to find meanings is to name them... it is a nomination in the course of becoming, a tireless approximation, a metonymic labor" (1974: 11). Work as labour, then, is central to both the production of text, as well as the reading and interpretation process itself, whether that process be enacted toward a work or a text.

Ever the confounding wordsmith, we can assume Barthes intended such a paradoxical inversion of work and process into his definition of the text, opposite that of *the work*, which does not contain 'work' on the reader's part. Barthes certainly gestures toward the tension inherent between the text and the work, being careful to deny a simple binary. He notes the cross-pollination between the two, the text in the work: "One cannot, therefore, count up texts, at least not in any regular way; all one can say is that in such-and-such a work, there is, or there isn't, some text" (1981: 39). The text may be unleashed within a work, but it is also that which exists *between* texts, the result of an intertextuality that requires a mosaic of work and text, of work being done to 'the work.'

Inverting Barthes's inversions then, we can give a name to this system of relations, this *network* which accounts for the way in which work and *the work*, as well as text and *the text*, are all simultaneously embodied within one entity: the *textwork*. Let's take the sprawling, ineffable *Harry Potter* series as an example. It is easy to underestimate the tremendous cultural impact of 'Pottermania,' relegating the boy wizard to a mere children's story and cultural fad. But sprawled across a torrent of films, video games, conventions, fansites, supplementary texts, merchandising tie-ins – even a unique musical genre: Wizard Rock – the *Harry Potter* series is currently valued at US$15 billion, a true cultural force that has touched the lives of children (and many adults)

across the globe. The original seven novels, each a weighty tome, might be considered as a

monologic work in the Barthesian sense. J.K. Rowling's fantasy writing, treated as scripture by

her adoring fans, is naturally considered the 'true' source of the *Harry Potter* universe, and its

simplistic tale of good versus evil in a coming-of-age tale of magic and mischief is the exact kind

of stabilizing, monologic work that Kristeva and Barthes would reject as overt consumer

ideology – its estimated $15 billion dollar profit margin certainly not helping its cause.

On the other hand, considering what has subsequently become of *Harry Potter* 'the work'

should warrant a pause for re-evaluation. Despite the iron-fisted control of *Harry Potter*

intellectual property by Rowling[14], her publishers (Scholastic and Bloomsbury), and Warner

Bros. (responsible for the film franchise) – all of whom have successfully sued against the

publication of unauthorized supplementary material, such as an encyclopaedic reference guide,

and have shut down countless fan-made creations – the fans have relentlessly continued to

utilize, harness, appropriate, and exploit the *Harry Potter* franchise for their own means.

Jenkins, in the previously discussed *Convergence Culture*, uses the *Harry Potter* series as one of

his case studies in exploring the evolving, interrelated paradigm of media convergence,

participatory culture, and collective intelligence. One of the results of such an immense,

dedicated fan-base is the high degree of fan participation – not mere consumption – in the *Harry

Potter* universe, such as online child-run newspapers (for the fictional Hogwarts school), Potter-

focused literacy campaigns, weekly podcasts, web-based pedagogy based primarily on

participation, and online depositories of fan fiction (online fan-written stories that use characters

or elements from original works – their legal status is still uncertain). With more than 375,000

stories on FanFiction.net, not to mention the excess of singularly dedicated fan fiction sites, the

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[14] Rowling, for her part, does have a positive relation with her fans and their creations, even bestowing 'fan site awards' on her official site to her favourites. Warner Bros. also, has had to reign in its copyright offensive in the face of overwhelming fan pressure.

Harry Potter universe is widely considered to be the most sought after and most prevalent of all fan fiction production online.

Though certainly surging in popularity in recent years, fan fiction is still very much a 'marginal' exercise, sought out by only the most dedicated of fans. But theoretically, fan fiction gives us a very explicit example of the work becoming text. Fans are transforming the work into the text, *literally*, filling its universe with radical plurality. Much fan fiction simply narrate alternative stories, or explore the hypothetical background of minor characters that were not developed in the original work. But there are more radical diversions as well, such as slash fiction, which typically depict leading male characters in romantic (often sexual) relationships with other male characters (Harry and Draco, in this case, though *Star Trek*'s Kirk and Spock are the 'original' slash couple). While Barthes credits modernist and postmodernist literature with a self-conscious use of language and signification that allows the text to be 're-written' by the newly empowered Reader, one cannot help but think Barthes would celebrate *actual* re-writing on such a massive scale as this.

Barthes merely theorized the *possibility* of re-writing's liberatory potential; the advent of various information communication technologies combined with the consolidated cultural industries has given the Reader actual tools to fully *realize* that possibility. If "the goal of literary work (of literature as work) is to make the reader no longer a consumer, but a producer of the text" (1974: 4), then are the amateur online Potter scribes not the accomplishment of this very goal? Witnessed quite literally in fan fiction specifically, but also more generally in the vast variety of ways fans appropriate cultural products, from Youtube mash-ups to costumes at conventions, re-writing the work into text is a key element of cultural products – *textworks* – in the Museum. In opposition (as well as co-operation) to the Harry Potter *work* penned by

Rowling, we must add the many examples of Harry Potter as *text*. To name but a few: MuggleNet's hugely popular editorials, The Leaky Cauldron's "PotterCast" (weekly award-winning podcast) and "Scribbulus" (over twenty issues of edited essays), HarryPotterFanZone's fan art and poetry, HogwartsLive's free online browser-based role-playing game, and the many campaigns of the Harry Potter Alliance – 'fight[ing] the Dark Arts in the real world' – which raise money for such causes as Darfur, Burma, and media consolidation. Rewriting *Harry Potter* into text has resulted in some curious creations, to say the least.

In *S/Z*, Barthes speaks specifically to this issue of re-writing. Analogous to the distinction between work and text, Barthes distinguishes between the 'readerly,' or lisible, and the 'writerly,' or scriptable. Classical monologic works maintain the division between "the producer of the text and its user, between its owner and its customer, between its author and its reader"; hence, the readerly leaves the reader with only "the poor freedom either to accept or reject the text: reading is nothing more than a *referendum*" (1974: 4; original emphasis). The writerly text, on the other hand:

> is a perpetual present, upon which no *consequent* language (which would inevitably make it past) can be superimposed; the writerly text is *ourselves writing*, before the infinite play of the world (the world as function) is traversed, intersected, stopped, plasticized by some singular system (Ideology, Genus, Criticism) which reduces the plurality of entrances, the opening of networks, the infinity of languages. (1974: 4; original emphasis)

The writerly function of 'network-opening' is rendered explicit online, clearly visible within the *Harry Potter* phenomenon, the pace of which, despite the actual ending of the series of novels, continues unabated. Fan fiction may seem a trivial occurrence, but it is an undeniable example of 'the plurality of entrances, the opening of networks, [and] the infinity of languages.' With the monologic work of *Harry Potter* at the end of one side of the spectrum, the peculiar popularity of

fan fiction as text on the other, the textwork is completed by considering how the *system* of both

works and texts operate together as a whole: networked.

The final element of the textwork – gestured toward by Barthes, but beyond his reach for

obvious, *pre-digital* reasons – is the networked system itself. Envisioning this textual world of

radical plurality often led Barthes to utilize the metaphor of the web and the network:

> the one text is not an (inductive) access to a Model, but entrance into a *network with a thousand entrances*... a perspective (of fragments, of voices from other texts, other codes) whose vanishing point is nonetheless ceaselessly pushed back, mysteriously opened: each (single) text is the very theory (and not the mere examples) of this vanishing, of this difference which indefinitely returns, insubmissive. (1974: 12; added emphasis)

Of course, this 'network with a thousand entrances' now exists as both physical and virtual

manifestation with the internet, and a ceaselessly pushed back vanishing point is our everyday

'reality.' Barthes could envision such a radical plurality, but without materially experiencing

culture as a networked hypertextual collage, he is unable to look beyond the confines of the text,

no matter how much subversive potential he ascribes it.

Network theory, particularly when utilized within an interdisciplinary approach such as

this, necessitates that we widen our scope to perceive systemic operational structure. As we

learned from Castells, there is more power in the network itself than in the individual nodal

points, so we must extend our conception of the text, not just what qualifies as text (as we have

already broadened), but how its multiple interactions with other texts is the primary quality of the

text itself. The radical plurality of something like the *Harry Potter* universe requires that we

perceive it as a network *first*, and a singular work or text second, if at all. When future

anthropologists look back to understand the *Harry Potter* 'craze' that occurred at the turn of the

century, will it be the original books that are the focus of its cultural importance? Even if the

core of its significance is allocated to the books, then this core will be positively *dwarfed* by the

surrounding circles of fansites, video games, literacy effects, book launch parties, podcasts, Darfur campaigns, and countless other connections. The cultural significance of *Harry Potter* as textwork, as a complex system of intertextual and intermedial relations, will far outweigh its mere literary content.

Allocating a position of primacy to the network and its correspondingly radical plurality does not necessarily mean surrendering analysis to the ether of limitless connection and the infinity of language. It does mean that frames of reference must be established, however. "Just as Einsteinian science demands that *the relativity of the frames of reference* be included in the object studied," Barthes explains, "so the combined action of Marxism, Freudianism and structuralism demands, in literature, the relativization of the relations of writer, reader and observer" (1977: 156; original emphasis). Unfortunately the brief interjection of 'in literature' here limits the imagined scope, but we can easily apply this lesson to cultural studies as a whole, maintaining an effort towards overtly defining the 'bundle,' or *swarm*, of interconnections we analyze. The textwork works both ways in this regard; it signals a vision of networked relativity and contingency, yet isolates and contains at the same time. Naming a textwork identifies the prime nodal points, but maintains its focus on the weave of connections.

Let us consider 'culture,' or instance of such, as a mass of interconnected wires, interwoven with the wires of the natural, the social, the economic, the technological, etc. Traditionally, critics have been required to isolate a tiny fragment, then shear the loose ends of their chosen bundle of wires, treating the text a unified whole, or at least rendering it as such, no matter how much they gesture towards peripheral elements and connections. With an eye towards a textwork, rather, the critic isolates a jumble of wires, but focuses on the jumble itself, particularly the loose wires and the connections that can be made, as these are increasingly the

bulk of the actual content. The traditional approach of cultural analysis is for a 20th century

system of *production* and *distribution*. The textwork methodology is conceived for a 21st

century system based on *access* and *circulation*. We will no doubt continue to focus on

singularities, such as we've been doing with literature, films, advertisements, and any manner of

textual production. But for the type of art that embodies multiple texts and straddles different

forms – that which increasingly dominates contemporary mass culture – the textwork is a more

appropriate and *productive* designation.

Both Kristeva and Barthes asserted that intertextuality was not about mere sources and

influences; the whole system of relations in language and the cultural code was to be re-

evaluated and, consequently, rescued from a hierarchical, totalizing structuralism. Thus, a

tension exists between establishing the systematic primacy of intertextuality, but without

ascribing it as 'the System,' wary as they were towards singularity in the form of 'Ideology,

Genus, Criticism,' etc. Perhaps it was this reluctance to appear as if advocating a totalizing

explanation that prevented Kristeva and Barthes from prescribing a more 'complete' system;

instead, they preferred to 'gesture' towards liberating potential. "In this ideal text," Barthes

explains:

> the networks are many and interact, without any one of them being able to surpass the
> rest; this text is a galaxy of signifiers, not a structure of signifieds; it has no beginning; it
> is reversible; we gain access to it by several entrances, none of which be authoritatively
> declared to be the main one; the codes it mobilizes extend *as far as the eye can reach*,
> they are indeterminable... the systems of meaning can take over this absolutely plural
> text, but their number is never closed, based as it is on the infinity of language. (1974: 5-
> 6; original emphasis)

The 'ideal text,' then, allows Barthes to spell out his theories on intertextuality and the political

possibilities of such a system, necessarily networked with 'several entrances,' without actually

confronting this system of language. With a primary focus on modernist novels, the 'entire

cultural code' is not really a concern to Kristeva and Barthes at all. Theirs was a self-defined culture, neither accepting of 'low' art nor interested in wider cultural dispersion and interconnection. Their 'galaxy of signifiers' is one still contained within a single book, even if they award agency to the Reader, free to make meaning from his own telescope, rather than some God-like Author who creates the cosmos. A true 'universe' of plurality is conceived only when the cultural code is *re-written writ large*; the 'triviality' of *Harry Potter* fan fiction is thus the ultimate confirmation of just such a vibrant universe. The supernova of J.K. Rowling's work is but one element of a diverse interstellar, polytextual system populated by a multitude of varying forms and mediums, works and texts, readers and re-writers – in short, it is teeming with (t)extraterrestial life.

CHAPTER 8 – MEANING IN THE MUSEUM:

KRAZY!, *CHILDREN OF MEN,* AND *V FOR VENDETTA*

With the theory-based conceptualization of the Museum and its textwork now established, it is finally time to turn to the material consumer reality of the Museum, witnessing it at work, and in play – moving from architect to curator, so to speak. And what better place to start than an actual museum, the Vancouver Art Gallery, which serendipitously happened to be exhibiting a brazen new look at the contemporary, polytextual field of visual culture as I wrote this thesis. Following this real museum, we will move to 'reel' museums, as seen in two recent films, *V for Vendetta* and *Children of Men*. Not only do these films employ a vast collection of explicit polytextual references and allusions, but they both exhibit a literal embodiment of the Museum with the 'Shadow Gallery' and the 'Ark of Arts,' respectively. Furthermore, we can witness how the Museum and its textwork fosters a different kind of meaning making; in the case of these two films, the Museum is central in presenting a dystopic, fascist future which implicates our own Western society in a subtle yet powerful way.

As anyone who has visited the Louvre can attest, the sublime experience of visiting a large and complex museum is also the unavoidable experience of feeling lost and overwhelmed. The Museum is no different; as a result, the following three chapters will be heavy on lengthy exposition cataloging the many polytextual elements of these specific textworks. The sheer magnitude of polytextuality on display is the defining feature of these textworks, and of the Museum itself, so extensive surveys are required. There will undoubtedly be absences, such is the density of polytextuality in the Museum. Like the Louvre, the Museum is simply incomprehensible with just one visit; it requires a serious commitment to take in its richness.

In the summer of 2008, the Vancouver Art Gallery exhibited "KRAZY! The Delirious World of Anime + Comics + Video Games + Art." Its stated objective was to bring "together, for the first time, these seven media – animated cartoons, anime, manga, comics, 'graphic novels,' computer/video games and visual art – in a single exhibition to explore their histories, their interrelations and their future trajectories" (Grenville 13). The result was more than a thousand individual artworks – from graphic novels to computer animation, action figures to silk screenings, magazine covers to claymation cartoons, Pac Man to *Afro Samurai* (which we will return to in the following chapter) – arranged together in a swirling array of mediums. "Offering an interdisciplinary account of contemporary visual culture," the exhibit sought "to create an opportunity to assess their influence and their collective presence as a sustained cultural force" (13). Considered as a whole, the opportunity the exhibit created was not merely to witness a cultural force, but the *force of culture*: a multitude of media in a polytextual swarm – much of it available for purchase at the gift shop, of course.

"KRAZY!" is best described as an experience rather than an exhibit. Patrons were encouraged to interact with the various art forms in a variety of ways: the video game section had playable set-ups of the games and interactive displays; the 'Manga Pod' provided readers a chance to select from a library of manga, comics, and graphic novels; Lynda Barry, featured in the comics section, invited patrons to "exorcise their demons" by sketching and leaving their creations for others; a large theatre room projected cartoons, anime, and film on multiple screens; the 'Fan Base' invited patrons to express what they felt was missing from each display, and over the course of the exhibit, the most popular suggestions were then incorporated. Events were another element of this interactivity: a speaker series, workshops, performance art throughout the

exhibition, and *FUSE* parties with live DJs and dancing. This was no stodgy, dusty old museum; it was a living Museum.

The actual art on display was of a similarly multitudinous character. One 'piece' in particular was representative: Pierre Huyghe and Philippe Parreno's multimedia installation *No Ghost Just a Shell*.[15] Having purchased the rights to a ready-made manga character from a catalogue, Huyghe and Parreno set out to give this character – whom they named AnnLee – a story, a form, a history, and an identity. From 1999-2002, they invited a host of other artists to fill this 'empty shell': filmmakers, video artists, painters, sculptors, conceptual artists, animation artists, graphic designers, writers, musicians, and curators. AnnLee's identity grew communally, assuming various forms, voices, and expressions. The final act in this polytextual, semiotic saga was to release AnnLee from representational exploitation; the rights to her character were ceded to an association she herself owned. A mediation on the very flow of art and media in a technocratic society, *No Ghost Just a Shell* is both a fitting description *and* embodiment of the Museum.

What struck me most about the "KRAZY!" exhibit was the way in which it just felt like a concentrated version of technoculture. Children ran around excitedly, playing video games and watching cartoons, adults discussed expressing the inexpressible in Art Spiegelman's classic graphic novel, *Maus*, and in the evening on the weekends, scenesters drank expensive drinks and were seen. As a dizzying spectacle of screens and signs, "KRAZY!" was an ephemeral experience not unlike the ever-increasingly mediated spectacle just outside its doors in downtown Vancouver. The differences between the 'real' inside the exhibit and outside it seemed negligible. In fact, one of the artworks was animated graffiti projected on to the wall of

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[15] A reference to the seminal Japanese anime film *Ghost in the Shell* (Oshii 1995), a story of cyborgs, artificial intelligence, and memory implantation.

a Sears building across from the gallery, sharing space with a gigantic animated billboard. A quite literal example of a Museum Without Walls, "KRAZY!" was not contained by any physical limitations, its presence not confined to the museum space. After playing Nintendo in a museum, does your living room become a museum? Or are they both already the same space, part of the same construct? The Museum erases this distinction, as the mediated spectacle needs no gallery space to exhibit its works. What then, is the difference between this 'real' museum, which extends to encompass our mediated lives in networked culture, and the experience of a 'reel' museum?

Film is a privileged medium in the Museum because it already incorporates many other mediums (photography, literature, theatre, music), and because its immersive abilities can give us the impression of life in the Museum. Two of its central elements – *mise-en-scene* and *montage* – are custom fit for this process. 'Putting in the scene' is the job of the Museum curator, a title all artists and cultural producers now hold, to varying degrees; montage is the very fragmentation and flow that fuels the Museum. *V for Vendetta* and *Children of Men* are fitting examples of this unique power of cinema in the Museum. Using mise-en-scene and montage, they build their diegetic world out of a multitude of texts, literally in the case of a key set in each film: the 'Shadow Gallery' and the 'Ark of Arts,' respectively.

Set in Britain in 2020, *V for Vendetta* follows the quest of a terrorist/freedom fighter named V (Hugo Weaving), who meets Evey (Natalie Portman) after saving her from an attempted rape by the secret police. Evey returns the favour the following day, saving V from one of the detectives on his trail, though she is knocked unconscious in the process. Rather than leave her to be interrogated and most likely killed, V decides to take Evey home with him. We are introduced to the Shadow Gallery along with Evey, who wakes up to the distant, sultry

sounds of Julie London's jazzy torch song, "Cry Me a River." In the first of many idolizations of

Classical Hollywood Cinema, "Cry Me a River" is most notable for London's performance of it

in the Jayne Mansfield film *The Girl Can't Help It* (Tashlin 1956). Evey awakens in a dimly lit

bedroom, surrounded by mountains and mountains of erratically stacked books. Slow, steady

camera movements curiously track along with the perplexed Evey as she leaves the bedroom and

begins to explore this mysterious subterranean lair, reminiscent of the Phantom's Lair in Gaston

Leroux's *Phantom of the Opera*, which also featured a masked hero out for revenge, not so

incidentally.

Elegant archways and gothic pillars lead Evey down hallways packed to the brim with

paintings, sculpture, artifacts, movie posters, books, photographs, pottery, framed comic book

covers, musical instruments, drawings, butterfly display cases, rugs, and more. A considerable

effort has been given to include as many different art forms as possible, all from different time

periods, styles, and cultures. Featured painting include *The Arnolfini Portrait* by Jan van Eyck,

Bacchus and Ariadne by Titian, *St. Sebastian* by Andrea Mantegna, and *The Lady of Shalott* by

John William Waterhouse. Juxtaposed with these classic works of art – and ascribed equally

lavish treatment – are movie posters for *Mildred Pierce* (Curtiz 1945) and *White Heat* (Walsh

1949), prominently featuring Joan Crawford and James Cagney, respectively. Later in the film,

V is seen watching and quoting from his favourite film, *The Count of Monte Cristo* (Lee 1934),

which also shares a similar revenge theme.

While Evey explores the Shadow Gallery, a constantly swirling camera provides limited

views down elaborate hallways and split-second glimpses at the many hidden treasures. Freeze-

frame at the right moment and you will catch a peek of the film projector and cans of film reels

hiding behind an archway. The structure of the Shadow Gallery, and the fleeting way in which it

is filmed, is fitting to the notion of the Museum: it is labyrinthine. At the centre of this labyrinth, radiating with light and drawing Evey's attention, is V's *pièce de résistance*: a vintage Wurlitzer jukebox, containing 872 blacklisted songs. Later in the film we will hear it play a haunting cover version of the Velvet Underground's "I Found a Reason," with Cat Power transforming Lou Reed's alienation into tragic foreboding, fitting of the scene's painful goodbye. Later still, on the eve of the revolution, Evey returns to the Shadow Gallery for one last dance, for as V claims, paraphrasing anarchist Emma Goldman, "A revolution without dancing is a revolution not worth having." So they dance to "Bird Gerhl," by Antony and the Johnsons, a transgendered artist whose lonesome, melancholic voice plays to the film's radical sexual politics (as well as producer Larry Wachowski's transgender ambiguity).

Children of Men contains a scene with a similarly elaborate Museum. The film is also set in a futuristic fascist Britain, except this time the hero's quest is to transport the world's only remaining pregnant woman to the Human Project, a mysterious group of scientists trying to cure the world's infertility problem. In order to get transport papers, Theo (Clive Owen) must visit his cousin Nigel (Danny Huston), a government official and curator of the "Ark of Arts," a repository for art salvaged from a war-torn world. The drive up to the museum, filmed on location at both the Tate Modern and the Battersea Power Station in London, is accompanied by King Crimson's "In The Court of The Crimson King." Like its counterpart the Shadow Gallery, the Ark of Arts juxtaposes a wide variety of divergent artwork. The first piece we see is *British Cops Kissing*, a piece of graffiti art stencilled by infamous British satiricist and prankster Banksy. As a result of his iconic street art bearing ironic depictions of an oppressive surveillance society, Banksy has been a key figure in raising the status of graffiti to art.

Like *V for Vendetta*, circular camera movement is used as if to 'unveil' this museum. Upstairs in the Ark of Arts, a stark composition reveals Michelangelo's *David*. Its left leg having sustained damage before it could be transported to safety, presumably, its foot is attached to its upper leg with a metal bar, adding an eerily cybernetic quality to this most famous of artworks. Nigel enters the hallway, proclaiming that he "couldn't save [Michelangelo's] *La Pietá*." Later in the film, a shot of a mother holding her son's corpse is composed to mimic *La Pietá*, in which the Virgin Mary cradles the dead body of Christ. The next scene occurs in a decadent dining room, Picasso's immense *Guernica* filling the background of the frame. An intensely violent image of disfigurement and suffering, *Guernica* was Picasso's expression of horror at the Nazi bombing of civilians in Guernica, Spain in 1937. Its apocalyptic sensibility looms large over the preceding conversation, just as that same sensibility looms over the film as a whole. A final nod to fascist-inspired imagery occurs with the inclusion of Pink Floyd's pig balloon floating outside the Battersea Power Station, as it did on the cover of their Orwell-influenced 1977 concept album *Animals*.

Both of these museum scenes occur early in each film, as if to prepare the viewer for the continuing onslaught of intertextual relationships. Television and the news media play important roles in each story. *V for Vendetta*'s totalitarian government spreads its message of fear and complacency through falsified media reports, and via "The Voice of London," Lewis Prothero (Roger Allum). Extolling rabid patriotism and evangelic Christianity through fiercely homophobic, racist and xenophobic tirades, Prothero is a thinly veiled jab at right-wing American pundits such as Bill O'Reilly and Rush Limbaugh. The racist propaganda continues with the sensationally violent television program, *Storm Saxon*, featuring an Aryan superhero. The potentially progressive power of television satire is illustrated by Deitrich's (Stephen Fry)

variety show, in which he defies censorship, compares the Chancellor to the terrorist, and pretends to shoot him in a *Benny Hill*-style montage. Deitrich is seen as a spiritual brethren of V; they are linked explicitly by preparing the same breakfast for Evey while listening to bossa nova songs by Antonio Carlos Jobim. Deitrich also possesses a hidden Museum, featuring a Koran, a Sex Pistols-esque stencilling depicting the Chancellor as the Queen, and a protest poster mixing the Stars and Stripes, the Union Jack, and a swastika under the title "Coalition of the Willing, To Power," referencing both the Iraq War and Friedrich Nietzsche.

Children of Men also features television and the news media prominently; the film begins with fractured audio clips exclaiming horrific news headlines, followed by a sudden static image depicting a crowd of onlookers glued to the screen at a coffee shop. Television screens can be seen everywhere in the public urban space, hanging and attached to buildings, plastered to the inside and outside of buses. The character of Jasper (Michael Caine, who modelled the role after his personal friend John Lennon) is a former political cartoonist, lending credibility to his understanding of the government's manipulation of news media. His catatonic wife is a former photo journalist, allegedly tortured by her own government. Both of these crucial character details must be ascertained with an observant eye during a slow pan through news clippings and photographs. Also visible in this pan is the postcard artwork of Leon Kuhn that replaces the Statue of Liberty with Satar Jabar, the subject of the iconic Abu Graihb photograph of a hooded prisoner, arms stretched, cloaked in black, standing on a box with wires connected to his body.

Literary references also abound in each film. In the case of *V for Vendetta*, a lot of V's dialogue is constructed from literary sources, such as *Macbeth* and *Twelfth Night*, as is his personal motto, "Vi Veri Veniversum Vivus Vici," ("By the power of truth, I, while living, have conquered the universe") from Christopher Marlowe's *The Tragical History of Doctor Faustus*.

The film's opening voice-over is the traditional British children's rhyme commemorating Guy Fawkes: "Remember, Remember the 5th of November / The gunpowder treason and plot / I know of no reason why the gunpowder treason / Should ever be forgot." Of course, George Orwell's *1984* is an obvious influence, and an interesting reversal occurs with regards to the 1984 British filmic version, as John Hurt moves from the role of Winston Smith, the protagonist, to Adam Sutler, the Big Brother/Adolf Hitler figure.

The source of *Children of Men*'s title is a verse from the King James version of Psalm 90:3: "Thou turnest man to destruction; and sayest, Return, ye children of men." Attesting to the film's atmosphere of desperation and salvation, this Psalm was written as a prayer of Moses. Despite other Biblical allusions, most notably the Nativity, with Theo and Kee (Claire-Hope Ashitey) playing the role of Joseph and Mary in search of an inn, the film is not purely a Christian allegory. Spoken by Jasper, as well as seen as the final parting message after the credits, the words "Shantih Shantih Shantih" are a Sanskrit phrase used in a Hindu prayer of peace, loosely meaning calm, quiet, tranquility, and peace. T.S. Eliot's poem "The Waste Land," a similarly apocalyptic interpretation of its present social order, also concludes with these words.

Continuing the literary intertextuality, not only are both films adaptations, but both involved an erratic and controversial adaptation process. Having been let down by Hollywood's previous attempts at adapting his work, as well as disapproving with the way the Wachowski Brothers' updated his story and distorted its politics, original author Alan Moore distanced himself from *V for Vendetta*, not permitting his name to be associated with the film in any way. In the case of *Children of Men*, the adaptation of the P.D. James novel went through various different screenwriters, eventually arriving at Timothy J. Sexton and Alfonso Cuarón, who

refused to read the original book, lest it influence his vision for the film. It's safe to say that both films have, at best, a tenuous connection with their source material.

Finally, the soundtrack plays an integral role in the use of the Museum in these films. Tchaikovsky's "1812 Overture" is used in *V for Vendetta* when the Houses of Parliament are destroyed, taking advantage of Tchaikovsky's cannon explosions that were written into his composition to reflect the horrors of the War of 1812. Following in the vein of *The Matrix* (Wachowski Brothers 1999), which used Rage Against the Machine's "Wake Up" during its credit sequence, *V for Vendetta* also concludes with an incitement to revolution, in this case, the Rolling Stones' "Street Fighting Man." Immediately following is Ethan Stoller's "BKAB," which contains excerpts from "On Black Power" by Malcolm X and "Address to the Women of America" by Gloria Steinem.

Children of Men weaves an even denser collage of music, alternating between a more classical score and diegetic rock, pop, and hip-hop selections. In order to advance the film's spiritual themes, legendary British composer John Tavener – an Orthodox Christian known for his "solemn, deeply liturgical mediations on the meaning of life, religion, faith and spirituality" (Broxton) – was commissioned to contribute the stunning "Fragments of an Angel." Other works of Tavener's included are "Song of the Angel," written to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations, "The Lamb," signifying the innocence of childhood, "Mother and Child," celebrating the miracle of childbirth, and "Eternity's Sunrise," which is based on the poetry of William Blake. While Jasper explains how Theo lost his son to the flu pandemic, we hear Gustav Mahler's "Nun Will Die Sonn' So Hell Aufgeh," the first cycle of the composer's tribute to the death of his child, "Kindertotenlieder" ("Child Death Songs"). One final apocalyptic touch is the use of Kryzysztof Penderecki's "Threnody for the Victims of Hiroshima"

during the hectic car-ambush and escape scene, foregoing typical chase-music for the shriek of a 52 string orchestra.

In addition to these classical pieces, the unconventional soundscape of *Children of Men* is littered with various popular music. Jasper, the aging hippie, is identified by his classic rock: Deep Purple's "Hush" becomes an eerie lullaby in a world without children, and an Italian-sung cover of the Rolling Stones' "Ruby Tuesday" echoes the film's conflicted multi-culturalism. Many contemporary British acts known for their socially conscious lyrics are featured, including Radiohead, Aphex Twin, Roots Manuva, and The Kills. Upon entrance to the refugee camp, the loudspeakers are heard to be playing the Libertine's "Arbeit Macht Frei" ("Work shall set you free"), the Nazi slogan that was inscribed into the gates of many of the concentration camps. Connections are made between Nazi and contemporary American abuses with "Homeland Security" banners and Abu Graihb imagery, including a re-enactment of the Satar Jabar photograph. The credits sequence of *Children of Men* also leaves the viewer with incitement for change, with John Lennon's "Bring on the Lucie (Freda Peeple)" decrying nationalism, and Jarvis Cocker proclaiming that "Cunts are still running the world," before leaving us with the hopeful sound of children laughing and playing to the textual image of "Shantih Shantih Shantih."

Upon consideration of the Museum in these films, the first question we might ask is why, in stories about a hero's quest to fight an oppressive totalitarian government, do we even need these scenes of a literal Museum? They seemingly serve no plot function, yet occupy considerable screen time. I would propose that the Museum – both in its explicit incarnation as a literal set piece and as an overall polytextual engagement throughout the film – plays a dual but contradictory role in each of the film's politics. On the one hand, the foregrounding of a

polytextual world – this exquisite attention to detail and overloading of textual reference – is an integral part of each film's critique of certain contemporary politics. On the other hand, the Museum can be perceived in these films as decadent and hedonistic, thereby implicating itself in a society of complacency.

Each film is a futuristic science-fiction adventure, yet much of their political resonance lies in their ability to make this deplorable future feel so contemporary. Whereas many science-fiction tales revel in their fetishization of technological advancement, the futuristic worlds of *V for Vendetta* and *Children of Men* are none too different than our own – they even appear retrograde at times, the antiquated surveillance technology of *V for Vendetta* or the dirty transportation of *Children of Men*, for instance. As Slavoj Žižek claims, "London is exactly the same as it is now, *only more so... Children of Men* is a science-fiction of our present itself" ("The Clash…"). Rather than a mere backdrop for the hero's quest, the detailed background of each of these films is elevated to that of a central character, thereby blurring focus between foreground and background. *Children of Men* emphasizes this with its roaming camera that remains 'behind' in certain scenes. A caged refugee's incoherent mumbling and sobbing, or the previously mentioned *La Pietá* framing of a mother holding her slain son – the camera momentarily leaves its main characters and hovers over these atrocities happening in the background. As my extensive cataloguing has indicated, this background which has been given such importance is largely polytextual in nature, a collage of various texts. The films rely on the Museum to build their intricate world.

While both films share this engagement with the Museum in order to present a dystopic world hauntingly similar to our own, their specific politics start to diverge upon closer inspection. *V for Vendetta*, a big-budget Hollywood blockbuster, skews to a larger audience and

its politics are more reductive as a result. Torture, fear-mongering, media manipulation, totalitarian governing, corporate corruption, religious hypocrisy – these themes are broached but never really developed with any depth. That being said, the film's two central messages – one man's terrorism is another man's freedom fighting, and homosexual relationships are compassionate and normative too – are ones that rarely receive such delicate treatment in popular mainstream Hollywood fare. If it takes a violent comic book superhero and expensive special effects to procure such a far-reaching pulpit, then so be it.

Children of Men, on the other hand, delivers a very nuanced assessment of contemporary politics. In what could also be considered a critique of *V for Vendetta*'s naivety, Cuarón complains that "many of the stories of the future involve something like 'Big Brother,' but I think that's a 20th-century view of tyranny. The tyranny happening now is taking new disguises – the tyranny of the 21st century is called 'democracy'" (as quoted in Žižek, "The Clash…"). Cuarón's film tackles many of the same dystopic themes of *V for Vendetta*, but with much more finesse, depicting a dystopic world that is not so easily cured. The infertility ravaging the planet is not simply a lack of biological potency (or Big Brother); it is a lack of meaningful political engagement. Theo's faith in humanity has been destroyed by a government that rules with fear and administers decadent pleasures. As Žižek asks, "Are these two features – hedonist permissiveness plus new forms of social apartheid and control based on fear – not what our societies are about?" ("The Clash…"). The real accomplishment in the film's conclusion is not the delivering of a newborn baby to the mysterious Human Project, but the renewing of Theo's devotion to life and to politics, a refusal of this hedonistic detachment.

Herein lies the contradictory element with regards to the film's use of the Museum. The 'Ark of Arts' in *Children of Men* is not purely a polytextual celebration of art, adding meaning to

its new context. It is also a symbol of decadence, and its curator, Nigel, is the only government figure we meet. He plays the role of the 'dandy' figure, who after questioned by Theo why he even bothers to save art even though no one will be left to appreciate it, responds, "I just don't think about it." A deleted scene on the film's DVD parlays this message as Nigel and Theo contemplate a self-portrait of Rembrandt: "Can you tell what he's saying?" "Whatever." "Exactly." *Children of Men* problematizes this decadence, whereas *V for Vendetta* simply revels in it. V, too, can be regarded as a 'dandy' figure, guilty of an aristocratic nostalgia for simpler times.

If this decadence, exemplified by the Museum, is part of the problem in a society of complacency, then the films themselves are guilty of such self-indulgence. The Museum can be used in a unique manner to make meaning, as my cataloging indicates, but it requires a level of familiarity with the art world that can have a discriminatory quality. Paradoxically, the Imaginary Museum was originally conceived by Malraux as unrestricted and all-inclusive, yet to fully appreciate it – and its networked, conglomerated, polytextual progeny – is to partake in what Noël Carroll labels "a two-tiered system of communication which sends an action/drama/fantasy-packed message to one segment of the audience and an additional hermetic, camouflaged, and recondite one to another" (244). Certainly, *V for Vendetta* and *Children of Men* are examples of such an appeal to both 'blockbuster' and 'intellectual' audiences, producing a discriminatory division between viewers who 'get it' and those who do not. A simple binary such as this is misleading, however, if we consider the possibility that the films might encourage viewers to seek out the sources of some of this polytextual referencing, then there is a transitional, educational element to this divide as well. Suffice to say, the Museum may be conceived in a utopian, egalitarian manner, but its execution is not so easily established.

Taken together, these two films, along with the "KRAZY!" exhibit, embody the multiplicity and dispersal of meaning in the Museum. Meaning making has always been conditional and open, contingent on the critic's own trajectory and context, but with the vast polytextual connections opened in a textwork, the opportunity for interpretation is increased with every reference found and connection made. *La Pietá* is an art work already rich for interpretation, but when you add Shakespeare and graffiti and television propaganda and a Nazi slogan-quoting punk song, then the critic is faced with an overabundance of signs and symbols, and interpretation necessarily involves the establishment of a network. Just mentioning Shakespeare does not automatically attribute meaning, however; it might just be name-dropping or empty pastiche. Part of the critic's job, then, is to attempt a disentanglement of this polytextual bombardment. As we will see in the following chapter, this task is made even more difficult by the breakdown in traditional structural confines such as genre.

CHAPTER 9 – STRUCTURE IN THE MUSEUM:

THE WU-TANG CLAN'S SAMURAI SWARM

My fantasy was to make a one-hour movie that people were just going to listen *to. They would hear my movie and see it in their minds. I'd read comic books like that, with sonic effects and kung fu voices in my head. That makes it more exciting so I try to create music in the same way.*
- The RZA (qtd. in Gross)

When mediums and forms engage in ceaseless circulation, as they do in the Museum, then traditional methods of designating structure begin to mutate. Genre is one such schematic that is in need of an update for the networked age. Much has been said about 'postmodern' genre hybridity, including the consequent backlash that claimed genre has always been hybridized to some extent, combining various types of generic plot (the romance plot with just about anything, for example).[16] But even these re-considerations of genre still reside safely within their own medium and discipline; crossmedia genre analysis remains undeveloped.[17] Without necessarily stepping as far back as the likes of Lévi-Strauss and Jakobson do, to the level of over-arching mythic ritual and language, there is a real need for concrete crossmedia genre analysis, particularly within the context of the conglomerated cultural industries. Not limited to simply mixing the genres of a single medium, the Museum casts genres of the whole entertainment field into a blender.

'Hip hop' – a term as unfixed as the cultural forms it represents – is exemplary of this increasing lack of structural boundary in the Museum. Despite its common reduction to a

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[16] In film studies, for example, Janet Staiger (2003) claims that "Hollywood films have never been 'pure' – that is, easily arranged into categories" (185); rather than hybrid, these films are 'inbred'.
[17] Steve Neale, in "Questions of Genre" (1990), calls for research into crossmedia genre analysis, but his call has, to the best of my knowledge, gone unheeded.

musical genre, hip hop is intermedial by origin; it arose in the Bronx in New York City in the 1970s as five distinct elements: Emceeing (or MCing, or rapping), DJing (or turntablism), graffiti, beatboxing, and breakdancing. Add fashion and slang to the mix, and already in its infancy we can identify a complex textwork stretching across multiple forms and mediums. By the new millennium, with a little help from the cultural industries, hip hop was labelled a 'global cultural movement' and its worth estimated, by Forbes, at $10 billion dollars annually. As its popularity and commercialization grew, so did its intermediality. The early 1990s 'hood film' cycle is an interesting case in point. This series of films – which includes *Boyz N the Hood* (Singleton 1991), *New Jack City* (Van Peebles 1991), *Menace II Society* (Hughes Brothers 1993), *Clockers* (Lee 1995), and dozens of others between 1991 and 1996 – demonstrates a distinct bond of cross-pollination and influence with hip hop, particularly the sub-genre of 'gangsta rap': urban imagery and slang, codes of masculinity, rappers-turned-actors, hip hop soundtracks, and a thematic focus on inner-city social and political issues such as poverty, crime, racism, drugs and violence. In the Museum, it would be of little use to separate these exhibits; gangsta rap and the hood film may take the form of different bodies, but they share the same genetic material.

The nebulous textwork of hip hop offers many fertile possibilities to consider the way genre operates intermedially; I've chosen a particular 'brand' based on its popularity, influence, and longevity. The Wu-Tang Clan, a New York collective that began as a group of nine rappers and is now a sprawling multinational business empire, will be explored in terms of its crossmedial and transnational 'sampling', particularly its propensity for Eastern mysticism and martial arts cinema, as well as the gangster film genre. Furthermore, Wu-Tang's self-

identification as a 'swarm of Killa Beez' – both as lyrical motif and entrepreneurial practice – provides the perfect metaphor for the circulation of a crossmedia textwork.

The Wu-Tang Clan was conceived as both an artistic and financial community; the nine original members – RZA, GZA, Method Man, Inspectah Deck, Raekwon, Masta Killa, Old Dirty Bastard, Ghostface Killah, and U-God – joined forces in 1992 to form not just a musical group, but an industry. RZA, the de-facto leader and the group's producer, asked the other members for five years of total control of the empire – one dynastic cycle – after which he would relinquish control. His strategy was to gain prominence and get signed to a major label as a group, but retain free agent status as individuals so each member could pursue their own record deal and career. Each label would then compete with each other, increasing promotion, and each member would continue to compete with the others, advancing skill.

The title of their debut album, 1993's *Enter the Wu-Tang (36 Chambers)*, is a reference to the kung-fu classic *The 36th Chamber of Shaolin* (Chia-Liang 1978), and the album's dense sonic collage is comprised of gritty beats, raw lyrics, soul samples, comic book references, and audio clips from martial arts movies such as *Shaolin and Wu Tang* (Leung 1981), from which the group took its name. Following its commercial and critical success, individual members followed the plan and began signing to various labels, each achieving successful solo debuts: Method Man's *Tical*, ODB's *Return to the 36 Chambers*, Raekwon's *Only Built 4 Cuban Linx*, Ghostface's *Ironman*, and GZA's *Liquid Swords*, which is built around clips from *Shogun Assassin* (Houston 1980). All were produced by the RZA and all featured multiple guest appearances from other Clan members.

The RZA's five year plan came to fruition with the group reforming and releasing *Wu-Tang Forever* in 1997, debuting at number one and entering the mainstream with a strong visual

imagery based on a killer bee swarm motif, which was influenced by *The Swarm* (Allen 1978).

The music video for "Triumph," the album's lead single, features a news report of a killer bee

invasion of New York City, the bees morphing into each member of the Clan as they deliver

their verse and overtake the city. The group's swarm was swelling outside its music as well;

hundreds of affiliate members were added to the 'Wu-Family' roster, receiving support from the

Wu-Tang Clan empire, financially, promotionally, and otherwise. New collectives were

spawned, many of them emphasizing the central swarm motif: Killarmy, Maccabeez, Wu-

Syndicate, Sunz of Man, and West Coast Killa Beez. Compilation albums featuring original

members and affiliates were common, and successful, such as *Wu-Tang Killa Bees: The Swarm*,

Wu-Chronicles, and *The Sting*. RZA explains this metaphor and business strategy succinctly,

noting two species of bees:

> *anthidium manicalcum*: this is the most aggressive territorial bee known; male often kills
> any bee who enters his territory; this bee represents the core members of the Wu-Tang
> clan; *megachile willughbiella:* comes from Kenya, an enormous family with thousands of
> species commonly called Mason Bees; they represent other artists and groups under the
> Wu-tang family. (The RZA 130)

The capitalist underpinning to this metaphor is no mistake, as the Wu-Tang brand name was also

diversifying its assets; Wu-Tang Records, Razor Sharp Records, 36 Chambers Records, Wu

Music Group, Wu-Tang International, and the over-arching Wu-Tang Corp. were all established.

Following *Wu-Tang Forever*, the swarm was set free to multiply; adapting to new

mediums was one of the key variations. What began as a musical collective quickly became a

crossmedia business enterprise. A 3D fighting video game, *Wu-Tang: Shaolin Style*, featured

original music from the group and continued the Wu mythology of violence and martial arts.[18]

The Wu Wear clothing line branded its audience with its iconic 'W' logo, and started a lasting

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[18] Ghostface Killah and Method Man also appear in the Def Jam video game series: *Def Jam Vendetta*, *Def Jam Fight For NY*, and *Def Jam: Icon*.

hip hop trend; Jay-Z, Puff Daddy, and others would soon follow suit. A comic book series was also published, *Nine Rings of Wu-Tang*, finally fulfilling the many comic book allusions they had made over the years in lyrics, cover art, and multiple alter-egos.[19] Many of the Wu-Tang members began acting in television and film; Method Man is perhaps the most successful, landing key roles in the highly acclaimed HBO series *Oz* and *The Wire*.

RZA began a productive career as a soundtrack producer and composer, working on martial arts-based films with such auteurs as Jim Jarmusch, for *Ghost Dog: The Way of the Samurai* (1999), and Quentin Tarantino, for *Kill Bill Vol. 1* (2003) and *Vol. 2* (2004), among many other projects. The influence of martial arts cinema on his work is now being channelled in reverse, as he himself has become heavily involved in the production of martial arts cinema: he soundtracked the revered *Afro Samurai* anime-adaptation and has begun work on writing and directing his cinematic debut, *Man with the Iron Fist*, as well as co-producing an African American remake of the cult classic *The Last Dragon* (Schultz 1985). Amidst all this intermedial work, the Wu continued their prolific music careers, reuniting for three other highly-acclaimed albums as a group, and continuing to unleash a swarm of solo albums.

In an attempt to explain the origins of their multifaceted mythology (and for our purposes, offering a tidy summary of their complex textwork), RZA wrote *The Wu-Tang Manual* in 2005, bringing together all the (conscious) crossmedia and crosscultural influences that have inspired the Wu-Tang Clan. I can think of no other more earnest, explicit incarnation of the Museum than when the RZA systematically outlines the bizarre intermedial mixture that forms 'the Way of the Wu': **martial arts**, **capitalism**, **comics**, **chess**, **organized crime**, **cinema**, and **chemistry** (narcotics, mostly). Integrating everything from Nietzsche to *The Simpsons*, Picasso to Garry Kasparov, Dr. Doom to Hitchcock, *Scarface* (De Palma 1983) to the concept of

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[19] Method Man also has his own graphic novel, creatively titled *Method Man*.

synesthesia, RZA spins a dense web of forms, mediums, influences, ideologies, and cultures. As a Museum guide to the exhibit he himself was instrumental in cultivating, RZA offers us personal explanations of the key nodal points in the vast Wu-Tang textwork.

This chapter is intentionally given the misnomer of *samurai* swarm, despite the group's primary focus on Chinese martial arts, particularly kung fu, rather than Japanese samurai culture. Various 'Eastern' influences blend together as the Wu-Tang plunder with indiscriminate disregard. But as Gerald Horne outlines in "The Asiatic Black Man?" there is a long and storied history of African American identification with Asian culture, perceivably united in their struggle against white supremacy. Starting with the Japanese defeat of Russia in 1905, seen as a strike against White domination, African American figures and organizations who could not agree on domestic matters (such as W. E. B. DuBois, Booker T. Washington, and Marcus Garvey) were consistently in agreement over their admiration for Japan. Before their attack on the British Empire, Tokyo even courted prominent black leaders in the U.S., promoting a 'Tokyo-Negro alliance' against 'the white man' (Horne 55). Culturally, Japan-related themes were also common in Black news media and literature, such as the headline "Japan to lead fight for Rights of Colored Races" (qtd. in Horne 50), or DuBois' fictional *Dark Princess* (1928), which called for a world-wide war against the white man.

For the Wu-Tang Clan, this transcultural connection continues, not just with its martial arts obsession, but with its over-arching philosophy as well. In a chapter entitled, appropriately enough, "The Grand Spiritual Megamix," RZA outlines the multiple religious influences the Wu-Tang draw from, including Taoism, Buddhism, and Confucianism (all of which RZA first discovered in film), as well as the Bible, Greco-Roman Mythology, and The Nation of Gods and Earths (an offshoot of the Nation of Islam, also called the Five-Percent Nation). The term

'Asiatic black man', in fact, comes from the foundational teachings of the Nation of Islam, whereby 'The Original Man' was believed to have come from the 'black nation of Asia' when it was still part of the African continent.[20] RZA and other members contributed to an album titled *The 5% Album*, including a track called "Original Man." Five-Percent teachings are seen throughout the Wu oeuvre, particularly Supreme Mathematics, from which they craft their complex numerology, and Supreme Language, which adds a spiritual layer to the 'Wu-slang' and acronyms that populate their lyrics.

This 'East-West' cultural exchange in hip hop is not merely a one-way street, however, as Ian Condry documents in *Hip-Hop Japan: Rap and the Paths of Cultural Globalization*. A testament to the unpredictability and unevenness of transnational flows, hip hop music and culture in Japan "spread from a small, underground scene in the eighties and early nineties, largely dismissed by Japan's major media companies, to become a mainstream pop culture phenomenon today [2006]" (1). Situated in such a radically different context than its origin, Condry looks at Japanese hip hop with an eye toward how it is relocated, re-interpreted, transformed, and commodified in this new setting. 'Authenticity' for Japanese rappers, as coded by image and fashion, is constantly in flux. "Americanized imagery constitutes only one side of a kind of mutual borrowing and remixing that happens in American uses of Asian imagery," Condry finds, "as when the Staten Island-based hip-hop crew Wu-Tang Clan uses kung fu imagery and sound samples in their videos and songs or produces Wu Wear shirts with gibberish Japanese writing" (28). While issues of cultural appropriation and exploitation certainly still apply, when the mingling, omnivorous taste of the Museum is seen in a marginalized-turned-

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[20] Genetic research confirms that the human species originated in East Africa, but prior to this discovery, this idea was, of course, considered blasphemy by many.

globalized form and community such as hip hop, the threat of monolithic cultural imperialism appears to lose its teeth.

Intermedial genre fusion can originate from either direction, traveling from one source to another, as we have seen with the East-West hip hop interchange, but it can also originate from both directions at the same time, as in the case of *Afro Samurai*. A unique example of cross-fertilized fusion, *Afro Samurai* began as a Japanese dōjinshi (self-published) manga, but achieved its critical and commercial acclaim when it was adapted as an anime mini-series by gaining the involvement of Samuel L. Jackson (as executive-producer and main voice talent) and the RZA (whose soundtrack, heard diegetically and sold separately, is essential in establishing the tone). It would go on to become both a feature-length movie and video game. Set in feudal Japan, it contains temporally-anachronistic elements such as cell phones, rocket-propelled-grenades and cyborgs, and its protagonist is an African American samurai ('Afro') with a comically large hairdo and a 'ghetto' vernacular. With its balletic blood spray reminiscent of early John Woo and its unlikely marriage of gritty hip hop with an anime-version of medieval Japan, *Afro Samurai*'s distinctive use of intermedial genre in the Museum earned it a place in one; it was prominently featured in the Vancouver Art Gallery's "KRAZY!" exhibit.

Kung fu and samurai films are not the only Wu-Tang Clan cinematic interpolation, however; Raekwon's *Only Built 4 Cuban Linx* (1995) is largely credited for establishing the subgenre of 'Mafioso rap,' and the hip hop fascination with the mafia more generally. Part of the allure, for the Wu-Tang Clan, was being from Staten Island, home to the Gambino crime family.[21] But like the cultural imaginary itself, cinema plays the key role in shaping the Wu-Tang version of the mafia. *Only Built 4 Cuban Linx* is structured as a cinematic crime epic, with

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[21] RZA claims to have known associates of the family, and according to an article in the *Village Voice* (Owen) in 2000, the FBI infiltrated the Wu-Tang Clan with Michael Caruso, a criminal-turned-informant, who was to report any involvement the group had with gun-running or the Gambino crime family.

songs playing out as mob stories (U-God is 'killed' in one, for example), punctuated with audio clips from *The Killer* (John Woo 1989), maintaining that 'Eastern' flavour. RZA's production shifts in a more cinematic direction as well: less minimal beats, more strings and soul samples. Typical gangster film iconography makes its way into the lyrical content, from lavish materialism to violent masculinity, and each member of the Clan takes on yet another alter-ego, as crime boss aliases forming a mob crew: the Wu-Gambinos.[22] Another prominent audio clip comes from De Palma's version of *Scarface*, a touchstone film within the hip hop and African American community, and youth culture more generally, as documented by Ken Tucker in *Scarface Nation: The Ultimate Gangster Movie and How It Changed America*. RZA extols the virtues of *The Godfather* (Coppola 1972) and *Scarface* at length in *The Wu-Tang Manual*, idolizing Vito Corleone and Tony Montana. The year after *Linx*'s release, Nas and Jay-Z would both assume mobster personas, and the influence could be seen in Notorious B.I.G. and 2Pac as well.

One need not be a collective to exploit network effects in the Museum, however, as Jay-Z amply demonstrates; his self-made status is a key part of his brand name. However, the Jay-Z narrative – of a drug dealer from the Macy Projects in Brooklyn who eventually becomes the C.E.O. of Def Jam Recordings – is as much a product of the gangster film genre, and its interpolation by Raekwon, as we have seen, as it is typical hip hop self-aggrandizement. Jay-Z is one of the most successful 'corporate gangsters' in hip hop; apart from his stint as Def Jam C.E.O., he is co-owner and co-founder of the Roc-A-Fella empire, which includes Roc-A-Fella Records, Roc-La-Familia, Roc-A-Fella Films and Rocawear, and is reported to have signed a $150 million dollar deal with Live Nation, one of the largest contracts ever awarded to a

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[22] If only to drive home the intermedial abyss that is the Wu-Tang Clan: Method Man's crime boss alias is actually a reference to a comic book character, Johnny Blaze, aka Ghostrider.

musician. This deal would be a crossmedia venture, including recordings, tours, production, merchandising, and more; these '360° deals' are seen as the future in a crumbling music industry (Leeds). One final intermedial example: after seeing an early version of *American Gangster* (Scott 2007),[23] Jay-Z recorded his own *American Gangster* (2007) concept album, recasting his drug-dealing youth in a similarly nostalgic manner with an album of 'mini-movies'. The album was released under his Def Jam Recordings, a subsidiary of Universal Recordings, and it is no coincidence that the film was distributed by Universal Studios; this was corporate, narrative, and intermedial synergy at its finest.

This brief glance at the vast Wu-Tang Clan textwork is but a 'sampling' of the group's prolific output in its nearly 20 year career; much is left unmentioned: the Clan's continued spatial remapping of Staten Island as 'Shaolin', the unrelenting pop-culture referencing of their lyrics, the identity construction of their multiple alter-egos (each has at least a handful, Method Man has upwards of 15), the linguistic ingenuity of their lyrics (*The Wu-Tang Manual* contains its own dictionary: The Wu-Slang Lexicon), and the massive, dedicated following they have built, to name but a few of the missing elements. But a comprehensive survey is not the objective at hand, nor would it be even remotely possible if one were to include the hundreds of Wu-affiliates. Rather, this foray into the Wu-Tang textwork – from martial arts to comic books to gangsters and back again – demonstrates the necessity, when conducting genre analysis, to also consider genres outside the medium at hand.

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[23] Who is that playing Moses Jones, New York police officer, in Scott's *American Gangster*? Why none other than the RZA of course!

CHAPTER 10 – POWER IN THE MUSEUM:

GENERAL ELECTRIC, *TRANSFORMERS*, AND *30 ROCK*

I love this idea, it's great synergy. By putting a T.V. actress into the movie world we can promote both. It's like how we're including a Heroes *DVD with every missile guidance system we sell.*
- Jack Donaghy, *30 Rock*[24]

Having considered textworks at their most minute (within museum exhibits, single scenes, and single texts), as well as their most diffuse (amidst genres and crossmedia structural relationships), we can now witness a textwork at its most powerful: a transnational conglomerate. We cannot, of course, attain a very comprehensive analysis of a transnational conglomerate in a single chapter of writing; they are, by definition, gargantuan in scope. Furthermore, we will be looking at General Electric, the world's largest conglomerate, so we will only be able to get a glimpse of the vast web of power it inhabits. "Perhaps GE is just too large and diverse a company to understand," a stock analyst at *Fortune* ponders. "Who can comprehend the aircraft industry, plastics, medical technology, insurance, mortgages, and derivative markets all at once? There could not possibly be a company more difficult to analyze than GE" (quoted in Warner). And this is without the inclusion of GE's vast cultural arm, such as NBC Universal, nor its vast interrelations with other corporations and conglomerates. Nevertheless, by focusing on how two seemingly opposed texts – *Transformers* and *30 Rock* – function within the GE textwork, we can consider the implications of conglomerated power and synergy within the Museum.

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[24] Episode 307 – "Senor Macho Solo"

There is a long history within cultural and media studies of 'industrial analysis' in order to determine the influence and power of commerce and business within culture and art. These studies typically take the form of over-arching systemic survey that do not delve into textual analysis of the products produced by this system, as we saw in Chapter Five, or they isolate a single business or corporation. In terms of the largest cultural industries, the Walt Disney Company has been a common choice for this type of study[25]; its evolution from Hollywood studio to corporate conglomerate and embodiment of the American spectacle makes for a tidy, self-contained narrative of one mouse's quest for media domination. Similarly, News Corporation has been an easy target as of late, particularly because of the quick ascent of 'Fair and Balanced' Fox News as well as C.E.O. Rupert Murdoch's portrayal as right-wing 'arch-villain'. Focusing on modern-day 'media barons' is a convenient strategy; it results in such hyperbole as Richard Hack's *Clash of the Titans: How the Unbridled Ambition of Ted Turner and Rupert Murdoch Has Created Global Empires That Control What We Read and Watch*. "From their perches high atop their media empires, these two executives control information" (4), laments Hack; unfortunately, it is a little more complex than that. Not only does a biographical, linear tale inevitably over-emphasize single, powerful players in a vast corporate conglomerate, it conceals the true nature of how power circulates in a networked system that is as co-operative as it is competitive.

To recall the historical developments in corporate conglomeration outlined in Chapter Five, 'alliance capitalism' has these entities operating as an oligopoly, or cartel, with inter-

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[25] To list just a few: Fjellman 1992, Smoodin 1994, Grover 1997, Byrne and McQuillan 1999, Wasko 2001, Budd and Kirsch 2005.

conglomerational partnerships and joint endeavours.[26] In light of this interacting configuement,

General Electric seems to be a more appropriate illustration of the way power flows in the

cultural-industrial complex. Having spent much of the last decade as the first or second largest

corporation in the world, General Electric is the definition of globe-spanning conglomerate. GE

Capital, GE Money, GE Commercial Finance, GE Consumer Finance, GE Technology

Infrastructure, GE Energy Infrastructure, GE Oil & Gas, GE Aviation, GE Healthcare, GE

Consumer & Industrial, GE Appliances, GE Security – the list of General Electric assets reads

like the ingredients to a functioning technocratic nation state. The bulk of its revenue, which is

annually in excess of $100 billion, derives from financial services, particularly overseas lending,

but its manufacturing arm is also immense, from appliances to nuclear reactors to jet engines to

'defense' (i.e. weapons production). One of its 'smaller' components is the joint ownership of

NBC Universal, which despite its relative insignificance to its corporate parents in terms of

revenue, is the third largest media and entertainment company in the world, and, as such, plays a

considerable role in the shaping of public and cultural opinion.

In 2004, NBC Universal was formed through a merger between National Broadcasting

Company (which GE acquired from the Radio Corporation of America in 1986) and the French-

based Vivendi Universal Entertainment (which was a subsidiary of what is now, along with

Canal+, called Vivendi SA). GE has an 80% stake in NBC Universal with the remaining 20%

owned by Vivendi SA. Christopher Anderson explains the symbolic significance of this

acquisition:

> By adding Vivendi's additional cable channels and Universal studios to NBC and its
> cable networks, GE created NBC Universal, a twenty-first-century media corporation
> operating in a television landscape for which the term *national broadcasting* is but a

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[26] I do not mean to insinuate the world of corporate conglomeration is all hugs and rainbows on account of its co-operative nature; in fact, inter-conglomerational partnership might be seen as the shrewdest business tactic of all, creating economies of scale with which only other mega-conglomerates can compete.

quaint reminder of a bygone era. The name Universal has its own history and brand-
name recognition dating back to the earliest days of Hollywood, but it also makes NBC
Universal a suitably descriptive name for a company determined to reinvent itself as a
global media titan. (276-278)

Globally, the company develops, produces, and markets entertainment, news, and information
through television (network and cable), film, the internet, and theme parks. NBC Universal's
'allegiant' ownership structure is reinforced by its many joint ventures, such as MSNBC, which
is an all-news cable network and web portal formed with Microsoft (to compete with CNN), and
the Weather Network, which it purchased with Bain Capital and the Blackstone Group, both
financial services and private equity firms.

As an example of the kind of media created in this diffuse power structure, *Transformers*
will prove to be a veritable smorgasbord of corporate investiture. It strikes me as indicative of
the current state of the cultural-industrial complex that two of the most wildly successful and
profitable media franchises of the last decade began as a theme park ride (*Pirates of the
Caribbean*) and a children's toy line (*Transformers*). Ever since it was purchased from the
Japanese toy company Takara in 1984, the Transformers franchise has been the source of endless
multi-sector integration by the world's second-largest toy company, Hasbro. Apart from its
continually revamped toy line, over the years the Transformers have starred in multiple comic
book series, thirteen different animated television shows, thirteen video games, six soundtracks,
an animated film, a theme park ride, and the 2007 live-action adaptation of which will be the
focus here. A rather benign source story of battling intergalactic toy robots, once transnational
conglomerates and the United States Military became involved, *Transformers* is anything but
benign.

Seemingly pushing the diffusion of inter-conglomerational production to its limit,
Transformers is the creation of a complex co-production between DreamWorks (at the time a

subsidiary of Viacom, which is owned by National Amusements, Inc.; now it has production deals with India's Reliance ADA Group and The Walt Disney Company), Paramount Pictures (a Viacom/National Amusements subsidiary), and United International Pictures (itself a joint venture of Paramount Pictures/Viacom/National Amusements and Universal Studios, which of course is owned by NBC Universal, itself a subsidiary of General Electric and Vivendi SA). That may sound convoluted, with *Transformers*' revenues already flowing in at least a half a dozen directions, but the corporate involvement is just beginning.

General Motors was a key sponsor of the film, and it is generously repaid with some of the most blatant product placement to ever grace the silver screen. Not just lavishly-framed shots of the corporate logo (though these do occur numerous times), GM products are actually the trademarked protagonists of *Transformers*: Bumblebee™, a classic Chevrolet Camaro (no longer the Volkswagen Bug it was in the original); Autobot Jazz®, a Pontiac Solstice; Autobot Ratchet®, a Hummer H2; and Ironhide®, a GMC TopKick truck. "You're going to see these cars as the heroes. You're not going to see the other actors," says Dino Bernacchi, GM's associate director of branded entertainment. "These cars are the stars, literally, in the movie" (quoted in Associated Press).[27] A subplot of the film involves our plucky young hero (if you can call him that; corporate sidekick is more apt), Sam Witwicky (Shia LaBeouf), performing that age-old American rite of passage: purchasing his first car. It ends up being Bumblebee™, a 1970s-era Camaro, who helps him try to win the heart of his high school crush, Mikaela Banes (Megan Fox). "Why if he's such a super advanced robot," she later asks, "does he turn into this piece of crap Camaro?" Offended, Bumblebee™ leaves the couple on the side of the road, only to return having upgraded to a shiny new 2009 concept Camaro. When this romantic subplot

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[27] An enormous advertising campaign, entitled "Transform Your Ride," promoted both GM products and the upcoming release of the film.

finally comes to fruition, Mikaela delivers one of the film's key pieces of dialogue: "I'm really glad I got in that car with you."

The United States Military was also a significant sponsor, edging the film into the territory of recruitment tool as a result. The film begins in "Qatar – The Middle East,"[28] as the United States Special Operations Command Central forward operations base (from which the 2003 Invasion of Iraq was launched) is being attacked by the Decepticons. The U.S. Military having lent the production all manner of tanks and aircraft to achieve a high level of 'realism', the film marks the cinematic debut of the F-22 Raptor, the stealth F-117 Nighthawk, and the V-22 Osprey, making the film an advertisement for Lockheed Martin and Boeing as well. General Electric just so happens to have joint ventures with Lockheed Martin for military aircraft production.

At the base, we are introduced to Captain William Lennox (Josh Duhamel), who plays the handsome, courageous, young 'Army of One' that stands up to Blackout, the Decepticon that takes the form of a MH-53M Pave Low IV helicopter. If this is too subtle to be labelled recruitment, then consider the plot line involving the Secretary of Defence who *literally* recruits *high school students* right into the upper levels of the FBI. It is two of these plucky young high school students, of course, who crack the code of the virus, and are able to hardwire some old equipment in order to send a signal to warn Air Force One. The American Military, after all, does not just need able-bodied infantry, but technology experts too. Somehow, near the conclusion of the film, Captain Lennox ends up crossing paths with our corporate-sidekick, Sam, who is experiencing a moment of fear before he faces Megatron, the film's uber-villain. Lennox then delivers the film's other key piece of dialogue: "Listen to me, you're a solider now son!"

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[28] Imagine England or France having to be labeled "Europe"?

Other corporate connections abound in *Transformers*, such as a scene shot at Burger King, a plot point involving Sam's eBay account, as seen on a Hewlett Packard computer, and Bumblebee™ communicating with his XM satellite radio. Hasbro simultaneously marketed the film and its toy line by brokering deals with 200 companies across 70 countries. Two separate soundtracks were released, and multiple DVD and HD-DVD editions were released (including digitally-added product placement for Cisco Systems). A special edition DVD was released exclusively through Wal-Mart that contained a prequel animated film, while the Target edition included a comic book.

But picking on *Transformers* for being a corporate-military shill is like shooting fish in a barrel; it is a Michael Bay film after all, produced by Steven Spielberg. The intent here is not to wave a finger at the big bad corporate-military-industrial complex, though that remains an important, if ever-mystifying priority. Rather, I wish to counteract that line of thought that would see *Transformers* as just Hollywood business-as-usual. This is not the Walt Disney Company making a film and then exploiting it by selling Happy Meals and countless special editions on DVD; this is at least a dozen transnational corporations having their hand in the pie, as well as the United States Military. This is a web of power and an economy of scale of such complexity that we do our understanding of popular culture a disservice by dismissing these types of films and products as merely crass commercialization, rather than their true placement, which is representative of the sophisticated, networked foundation to popular culture.

As an example of how this web of power does not produce only mindless *Transformers*-like synergy spectacles, I will turn to a counter-example also within the GE family, a critically-acclaimed and Emmy/Peabody award-winning television show that embraces and satirizes the very process of synergy. *30 Rock* is the creation of Tina Fey, and takes place behind the scenes

of a fictional NBC comedy show, not unlike *Saturday Night Live*, of which Fey was head writer

and cast member before leaving to start *30 Rock* in 2006. Fey plays Liz Lemon, creator of "The

Girlie Show" (or "TGS"), and throughout the series she struggles with trying to have both a

demanding career and a personal life/family, as well as retaining the show's artistic dignity in the

face of corporate interference. Jack Donaghy (Alec Baldwin), Vice President of East Coast

Television and Microwave Oven Programming at General Electric, is the source of this intrusion,

and exhibits many similarities[29] to the illustrious Jack Welch, C.E.O. of GE from 1981-2001,

who during his tenure took the company from a market value of $14 billion to more than $410

billion. The rest of the cast is an ensemble of actors, writers, and producers of "TGS," as well as

NBC Universal/GE employees.

Technically, *30 Rock* would be classified under the television genre of situational

comedy, specifically the workplace subgenre, but in light of the previous chapter's discussion of

intermedial genre, we might consider it a backstage musical of sorts as well, a category typically

reserved for film. Apart from actual song-and-dance numbers, which *30 Rock* has done

occasionally, the plot is constructed around creative talent struggling to produce a 'show', which

we get glimpses of from time to time, and the 'wise-cracking chorus line' is seen in the form of a

team of comedy writers. In cinematic backstage musicals, the making of a romantic couple is

intrinsically related to the success of the show, and herein lies the delicate relationship at the

'heart' of *30 Rock*. Liz and Jack grow to be close friends over the course of the show, but there

are several moments fraught with sexual tension, and the friction between his corporate,

conservative leanings and her creative, liberal tendencies are the source of much of the show's

comedy. But the backstage musical is contingent on the formation of the romantic couple; "Not

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[29] Besides the obvious allusion to Welch's ruthless candor and competitiveness, firing the bottom 10% of his managers each year, for example, there are also minor allusions made, such as Welch's stutter and the competition to be his replacement when he retired, which becomes a season-long plot arc in *30 Rock*.

only does love inspire the show (or vice-versa), but love *is* the show – the climax of the one must serve for the other as well… show musical syntax depends on couples who 'make beautiful music together'" (Altman 212). As we will see, however, it is not 'beautiful music' that Liz and Jack make together, but 'beautiful business'. We might call this the boardroom musical.

Right from the beginning of the very first episode, the tenor of the show is set: "Surely our massive conglomerate parent company could spring for a samovar of coffee."[30] Even the name *30 Rock* refers to the address "30 Rockefeller Plaza," of the General Electric Building, the 70-story skyscraper and centrepiece of 22-acre Rockefeller Center in New York City where NBC Studios is located. This setting allows the show to oscillate between the studio where "TGS" is being produced and other NBC shows, as well as 'upstairs to corporate' and Jack Donaghy. The first episode also introduces the idea of synergy, as Jack proclaims himself the inventor of the GE trivection oven (a real product), which combines three types of heat: radiant, convection and microwave. In an effort to appeal to multiple markets, particularly the young male demographic, Jack adds movie star Tracey Jordan (Tracey Morgan) to the cast of "TGS," claiming him to be 'the third heat'. Unbeknownst to Fey, GE decided to run advertisements for its trivection oven during the original broadcast, adding some real synergy to their satirical synergy. We can use this division, and potential lack thereof, to study the implications of product integration and corporate synergy in the GE textwork.

Satirical synergy is seen in a variety of forms on *30 Rock*, and the term is explicitly mentioned in ridiculous contexts on a variety of occasions, such as Jack's nonsense excuse for firing staff: "we have to synergize backward overflow."[31] Absurd adspeak is parodied, such as 'adverlingus', and an entire episode is dedicated to 'pos-mens' (positive-mentions of sponsored

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[30] Episode 101 – "Pilot"
[31] Episode 117 – "The Fighting Irish"

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products), which includes an exaggerated product integration with Snapple while Liz openly

refuses to compromise the integrity of the show. In an episode where Liz and Jack go to a GE

Six Sigma corporate retreat,[32] Liz complains that she hates "those corporate things – a bunch of

drunk people talking about synergy." "First of all," Jack retorts, "never bad mouth synergy."[33]

The show creates all manner of exaggerated faux-synergisms as well, including Jenna's (Jane

Krakowski) plot line in which she is auditioning for a Janis Joplin biopic, leading to the *Heroes*

and weapons systems remark with which this chapter began, a joke that requires knowledge of

GE's minimally-publicized military arms production. At one point Jack develops a reality show

called "MILF Island," which he insists be cross-promoted on "TGS" and other NBC platforms,

and the process of synergy is parodied. When *30 Rock* ventures into promotion of other actual

NBC shows and channels, however, the synergy stops being purely satirical.

Set at NBC studios in the GE Building, *30 Rock* is inevitably going to promote its parent

companies, and the show makes no effort in hiding this fact. Kenneth (Jack McBrayer), the

cheerful NBC page (intern), is often seen polishing the NBC Universal logo that hangs above his

desk. When giving tours, he wanders hallways covered with classic NBC logos framed on the

wall, making for a kind of makeshift NBC Museum of memorabilia. But the real synergy lies in

the constant inclusion of other NBC platforms. Lemon's ex-boyfriend is seen on *Dateline NBC:*

To Catch a Predator. Jenna confuses Osama bin Laden and then-Senator Barack Obama on

MSNBC's *Hardball with Chris Matthews*. Tracey tries to stab Conan O'Brien on the *Late Show*.

Jack has an alter-ego named Generalissimo on a Mexican soap opera airing on Telemundo, the

world's second-largest Spanish-language network that Jack is trying to acquire (as the real GE

did in 2002). *The Today Show* and *NBC Nightly News* also make frequent appearances. Another

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[32] Six Sigma corporate retreats do exist, and the Six Sigma business management strategy introduced company-wide by Jack Welch is considered one of the key reasons he was able to achieve such tremendous success.
[33] Episode 309 – "Retreat To Move Forward"

form of NBC synergy occurs with the consistent reference to old NBC programs: *Friends*, *The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air*, *The Cosby Show*, *Frasier*, *Alf*, *3rd Rock from the Sun*, and *Night Court* have all been jokes or plot points, and some of the actors have made cameos. With DVD sales of television programs proving to be a significant new revenue stream, one cannot help but think these 'pos-mens' have an ulterior motive.

More often than not, these synergistic plot lines straddle the line between actual and satirical synergy, such as the much-publicized cameo of Jerry Seinfeld for the Season Two premiere. Jack plans 'Seinfeld Vision', in which, by digitally manipulating old stock-footage of *Seinfeld*, "for the month of October, all of our prime-time shows will feature a computerized guest appearance from Mr. Jerry Seinfeld."[34] Examples are shown with him in actual NBC shows – *Law and Order*, *Heroes*, and *Deal or No Deal* – as well as the aforementioned "MILF Island." *Medium*, *The Biggest Loser*, and *ER* are also mentioned, and the satire relies on how ridiculous and crass this ploy would be. But the synergy works for Seinfeld himself too, as the animated feature he wrote and voiced, *Bee Movie* (Smith & Hickner 2007), is not only seen playing in the background of one shot, but in exchange for 'Seinfeld Vision', he wants "two million dollars to the charity of my choice [and] ten free commercials for Bee Movie."[35] Then, addressing the camera directly, he says "Opening November 2nd." The final offer involves Al Roker wearing a bee costume on *The Today Show*, and satirical synergy meets actual synergy, for both NBC and *Bee Movie*, the Dreamworks/Paramount production.

While much of this synergy is relatively harmless, as much as joking about missile systems can be considered 'harmless,' one episode in particular potentially crosses the line. In November of 2007, NBC Universal launched its first official 'Green Week', presenting over 150

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[34] Episode 201 – "Seinfeld Vision"
[35] Ibid.

hours of environmentally themed content across its various platforms. *30 Rock* played its part,

and like its requirement to use product integration, it did so with self-reflexive parody. The

episode begins with Jack proclaiming the brilliance of GE's new environmental strategy, "pitting

all of the divisions of the company against each other to see who can make the most money from

this environmentalism trend."[36] Jack's idea is to cross-promote a green mascot, played by ex-

Friends star David Schwimmer: "Greenzo – saving the earth while maintaining profitability…

America's first non-judgemental, business-friendly environmental advocate." On *The Today*

Show, Greenzo advises children to pressure their parents "to buy a GE Front Loading Washing

Machine to save water."

Greenzo is eventually fired for becoming self-righteous and taking the initiative too

seriously, and Al Gore is brought in for the final self-reflexive pitch:

> If your network really wants to demonstrate a commitment to the environment, why don't
> you start by, for example, having an entire week with nothing but environmental themes
> on all the programs. Use entertainment for substance! You can have a character in
> primetime making a passionate argument to the American people, that we need CO_2 taxes
> to replace the payroll taxes. Your parent company could lobby congress and the
> president to pass the treaty and save the climate!

Or, its parent company could do a little better than pledging to reduce its greenhouse gas

emissions by more than a measly one percent by 2012. Or, its parent company could stop

fighting the Environmental Protection Agency in order to weaken proposed standards for air

pollution. "It is the height of hypocrisy," says Frank O'Donnell, president of Clean Air Watch,

"for GE to be spending money advertising so-called green locomotives while lobbying behind

closed doors against important standards needed to protect our health from train emissions"

(quoted in Fialka). 'Greenwashing' refers to the deceptive use of marketing to spin a company's

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[36] Episode 205 – "Greenzo"

products or policies as environmentally-friendly when they are anything but; General Electric is one of the practice's most flagrant perpetrators.

By all measures, GE is one of the country's, if not the world's most heinous polluters. Its most well-known environmental disaster is the poisoning of the Hudson River with PCBs during the 1950s-1970s. To this day it still refuses to pay for its clean up, instead spending millions on a legal and media battle to avoid responsibility. A producer and proponent of nuclear energy, GE's legacy also includes nuclear experiments in the 1960s, part of which involved "64 prisoners [having] their scrotums and testes irradiated to determine the effects of radiation on human reproductive organs" (O'Donnell). Unfortunately, since then its record has not improved; according to the Political Economy Research Institute, it is the fourth-largest corporate producer of air pollution in the United States, and according to the EPA, the fourth-largest producer of toxic waste. Its approach to public relations has changed though, and in 2005, launched its 'Ecomagination' campaign, which seeks to 'imagine and build innovative solutions that solve today's environmental challenges'. A *Wall Street Journal* analysis of 'Ecomagination' notes that, two years into the campaign, GE "continues to sell coal-fired steam turbines and is delving deeper into oil-and-gas production. Meanwhile, its finance unit seeks out coal-related investments including power plants... Yet these limitations haven't stopped GE from making a big marketing to-do of its commitment to the environment" (Kranhold). Is *30 Rock* complicit in this 'big marketing to-do'?

The *30 Rock* 'green' episode does acknowledge the hypocrisy of a transnational conglomerate pretending to be green: "It's part of our new company-wide global eco-initiative, we're going green Lemon, and do you know why?" "To save the earth?" "So we can drain the

remainder of its resources."[37] But the satire is a kind of bait-and-switch, making jokes about

GE's greenwash while participating in it all the same. Al Gore's sermon conveniently elides

over GE's liability, implicating the government's inability to pass a carbon tax instead (which

GE lobbies against, of course). The GE greenwash includes the slogan 'Green is Universal',

which deviously promotes its own NBC Universal brand; another campaign is 'Green Your

Routine', promoting minor day-to-day changes viewers can make to be more environmentally-

conscious. Again, the larger environmental disaster at hand – General Electric itself – is passed

over; not only is corporate responsibility not taken, positive branding is achieved. With some

cute synergy jokes, some actual GE/NBC synergy, and some celebrity cameo circumvention, *30

Rock* helps GE accomplish its greenwash.

Furthermore, is this complicity on the part of *30 Rock* applicable on a larger scale? More

specifically, does *30 Rock* contribute positively to the branding of General Electric as a corporate

conglomerate, not just its environmental appearance? As a light-hearted, enjoyable comedy,

occasionally making inconsequential jokes at the expense of its parent company, it certainly is

not *harming* its brand name. GE gets to appear as if it can take a joke (as long as it does not

actually get implicated in any foul play), and *30 Rock* is seen as 'outsmarting' production

integration and corporate synergy with self-reflexivity, engaging in it all the same. As a

situational work place comedy, it makes corporate headquarters – 30 Rockefeller Plaza – seem

like a congenial, even joyous workplace. And Jack Donaghy is perhaps the most enjoyable,

likable character on the show. Imagine *It's a Wonderful Life* (Capra 1946) with Mr. Potter as a

witty, debonair playboy. Liz's initial reluctance to commercialize her show has faded over the

course of the show; her and Jack have become highly skilled at making 'beautiful business'

together.

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[37] Episode 205 – "Greenzo"

On the other hand, we might look at this 'boardroom musical' in the same way Richard Dyer does the Hollywood musical. "Entertainment," he writes, "does not… present models of utopian worlds, as in the classical utopias of Sir Thomas More, William Morris, *et al*. Rather the utopianism is contained in the feelings it embodies. It presents, head on as it were, what utopia would feel like [i.e., pleasure] rather than how it would be organized" (177). *30 Rock* certainly produces the feeling in which your workplace is a constant source of hilarity and hijinks, and even your boss is a dear friend. Perhaps it is imagining a utopia where business and art need not be mutually exclusive terms. In order to accomplish this goal, it starts living it. According to Linda Hutcheon, "it is the complicity of postmodern parody—its inscribing as well as undermining of that which it parodies—that is central to its ability to be understood" (101). Does this mean that the stronger the complicity, the stronger the parody?

Whether or not one thinks *30 Rock* succeeds as corporate satire, or considers it nothing less than positive branding and greenwashing for one of the world's most vile transnational conglomerates,[38] it is nonetheless a lesson or parable in modern economics and synergy. Despite its comic twisting of the process in order to produce comedy, *30 Rock* still reveals much about synergy and the operation of a late capitalist corporation, and specifically how this embeds itself within our art and culture. In this regard, *Transformers* accomplishes the same task; it might be a blatant advertisement for GM Motors and the U.S. Military, but it does not pretend to be anything but. It reveals the web of synergy and conglomeration in its very explicitness. In an early episode of *30 Rock*, Tracey seeks Jack's help on exploiting his celebrity to sell his own appliance in an infomercial. Jack pulls down a complex organizational flow chart of GE assets, explaining that he will:

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[38] …Or if it can be both, as this critic believes.

pass this off to one of our subsidiaries. You see, GE owns KitchenAll of Colorado, which in turn owns JMI of Stamford, which is a majority shareholder of Pokerfastlane.com, which recently acquired the Sheinhardt Wig Company, which owns NBC outright. NBC owns Winnipeg Iron Works which owns the AHP Chanagi Party Meats company of Pyongyang, North Korea, and *they* will make the Meat Machine.[39]

Some of the details are false or exaggerated, of course, but the chart also includes a somewhat accurate representation of conglomeration, including many of GE's central divisions: Aeronautics, Financing, Energy, Oil & Gas, Appliances, etc. Here, *30 Rock* is *literally* mapping out the complexities of transnational late capitalism. By moving towards the creation of networked, polytextual worlds, our art is adapting to this new inter-conglomerational corporate reality.

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[39] Episode 110 – "The Rural Juror"

CHAPTER 11: CONCLUSION

Science involves confronting our `absolute stupidity'. That kind of stupidity is an existential fact, inherent in our efforts to push our way into the unknown… The more comfortable we become with being stupid, the deeper we will wade into the unknown and the more likely we are to make big discoveries.
- Martin A. Schwartz, "The importance of stupidity in scientific research"

Jack: *"We may not be the best people…"*
Liz: *"…But we're not the worst."*
Both, in unison: *"Graduate students are the worst."*
- *30 Rock*[40]

Like the adage that a historical film says more about the time it was made than the time it depicts, this project probably says more about the author trying to figure out how to approach the topic rather than the actual topic. If graduate students and their work is typified by a smug, 'know-it-all' attitude, then let this precocious polemic of theoretical futurology be received in the spirit of ambitious 'stupidity' rather than arrogance. Admittedly, the scope of the Museum, from polytextuality to cultural economy to textwork, is far too large for the space afforded it here. Furthermore, I am by no means an expert in any of the various theories and philosophies I employ in my interdisciplinary mix. If ever there was a time and place to 'wade into the unknown', though, I expect it would be at the Master's level, where the pressure to specialize completely is low and the freedom to explore is high. I can only hope that the quality and innovation of my ideas outpaces the lack of rigourous methodology.

Considering the current state of this project's dispersion, it is hard to imagine that this is actually the significantly reduced version, and that my original intent with this project was even more foolishly broad and wide-ranging. Initially, in addition to the Geography and the Display,

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[40] Episode 301 – "Do-Over"

there was to be an entire other Section concerning the Patron of the Museum, which would explore the myriad ways in which audiences and users engage with polytextual art in the Museum. A fourth case study about video games and their explicit rendering of Malraux's 'world-building' conception of art was also excised. At one point, I considered attempting a quantitative analysis of polytextuality, which would have measured, for example, the increase in intermedial references in specific mediums, the diversification of franchise revenue streams, and the intensification of corporate conglomeration; this idea will be saved for future work. As the conception of the Museum swelled wider and wider, I decided this project warranted further research and would make a suitable doctoral dissertation topic. In that incarnation, not just the space of the Museum will be considered, but its temporal qualities as well; rather than Francis Fukuyama's infamous 'end of history', the Museum exists in a perpetual 'blend of history'. No longer with the need to force all of my ideas into this version of the Museum's conception, I was able to focus my efforts on 4 main theorists, 6 case studies, and 100 pages.

As much as I hope this project has contributed something to the 'field' of media and cultural studies, or at least opens up the possibility to eventually contribute something, I can at least claim success in figuring out what constitutes my personal 'field' of study: the study of 'fields'. Having been torn between two disciplines – film studies and media studies – throughout my undergraduate and graduate education, I've always implicitly relied on interdisciplinary 'blending', but never to the degree of this project, in which the blending of fields was itself the topic of study. By weaving neo-aesthetics, polytextuality and cultural economy together into a network, not only have I found a way to study all of my desired media (film, television, popular music, and the internet), but I've also discovered my 'voice', as it were. With the Museum, polytextuality and the textwork, as well as minor conceptions such as the swarm and the

boardroom musical, I've begun to craft a language in which we can attempt to comprehend some of the radical elements and implications of our conglomerated technoculture.

To recall Zizek's methodology that informed this project – the 'short-circuit': to cross conceptual wires that do not usually touch – my network of circuitry was designed to achieve a degree of synergy. Ideally, the sum of its parts should add up to more than its individual elements. The swarm of the Wu-Tang Clan in Chapter Nine, for instance, should refract back on to the networked flows of capital discussed in Chapter Five, just as the neo-aesthetics of the "KRAZY!" exhibit in Chapter Eight is the inevitable outcome of André Malraux's contingent philosophy of art as seen in Chapter Three. The synergy between neo-aesthetics and intertextuality is obvious enough, as the mass proliferation of texts and products created by the cultural industries is matched by an increasing desire to affirm them the status of art and note their interrelations. But the addition of an economic analysis, particularly one based in the relatively new field of cultural economy, is what I consider to be, in the parlance of *30 Rock*, my 'third heat'. By concretely locating the theory of polytextuality within wide-ranging industrial practice, I have intended to give my project a pragmatic edge to match its interdisplinarity.

Ironically, what frustrates me most about the current state of media/cultural/film studies is the tendency to treat objects of study as if they *were* in a museum – isolate and identify, confine and classify. But this is a stodgy, dusty old museum, in which scholars rarely venture outside their own collection or exhibition, not the living, breathing, dynamic museum I envision. The Museum, based on neo-aesthetics, polytextuality and corporate conglomeration, is both a description of a vast, networked consumer playground, as well as a model for the study of said system. This not merely about interdisciplinarity, which has been 'cutting edge' for some 50 years now, nor is it about merely missing the forest for the trees. Missing the forest for the trees,

in fact, is a quaint problem in the midst of a rhizomatic swarm of interconnected vegetation. We cannot just study forests, let alone trees, but ecosystems and planets, even galaxies. In the same way environmental research has necessarily had to drift toward systems analysis, particularly in the face of global ecological problems, media/cultural/film studies must adapt to a global, networked technoculture. Rather than sitting back comfortably in the safety of our obscurities, we should be out cutting down trees and blazing trail. If we imagine art as part of a living ecosystem, rather than merely a collection of unique species, then we might be able to contribute more substantially to the actual formation and reproduction of that ecosystem. It is a pretty safe assumption to say we are in for some tough times in the coming years, and would that I could, I do not intend on spending those years researching some avant-garde obscurity, nor some historical oddity.[41] No, I would rather pursue an unverifiable, totalizing conception of how popular technoculture functions writ large, in the hope that it contributes to our understanding of cultural economy in these dire times. Stupid, I know. Graduate students are so self-righteous.

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[41] Not to dismiss the value of this kind of work – it is all extremely valuable – I merely wish to question the priority we give to certain kinds of work in the face of potentially ruinous times to come.

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