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Digital cinema and the legacy of George Lucas

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Digital Cinema and the Legacy of George Lucas

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For my family, whose continued love, patience, and support has made this possible

Abstract

Cinema history is strewn with moments of significant upheaval inextricably tied to the ontological evolution of the medium. Reappraising how we have defined and discussed cinema reveals a gradual process of growth often fraught with both anxiety and optimism. However, cinema's latest technological advancement appears to have generated particularly vociferous discussion. This thesis re-assesses the perceived threat of digitisation to understand what exactly sets it apart from those preceding it.

The research considers cinema's latest mutation by placing George Lucas at its core. Although he is a significant figure in cinema history, critical studies of Lucas are dominated by *Star Wars*, a topic which overshadows retrospective discussions about the wider legacy of his career. As such, I seek to build upon the paucity of material focusing on his role as figurehead of the digital filmmaking revolution. I cite a range of frequently overlooked and underappreciated primary sources like interviews and testimonies in order to construct a framework within which the subsequent analysis operates. This Lucas-centric approach offers a unique perspective on the digital cinema debate by directly engaging with one of its most vocal proponents.

The first core research question queries why the digital turn has generated such widespread apprehension for the future of cinema. In order to determine the extent of his influence, it then considers the role Lucas played in pioneering the digital filmmaking technology which has precipitated the digital turn. The thesis then questions how this technology has facilitated the broader democratisation of filmmaking, as well as its wider effects, before finally exploring how the digital turn has affected the use of paratextual material in both the narrative and promotional extrusion of the film text.

Contents

Introduction

> ***In scholarly debates, cinema has so far been declared dead for many reasons, some concerning its aesthetic quality or the implications of digitialisation […]. The notion regarding the death of cinema has always been closely linked with the technological developments that have changed it***
>
> (Grundström, 2018 p. 6)

Scholarly discourse supports the above claim made by Heidi Grundström and reveals that cinema has been eternally beset by these declarations, especially at times of significant upheaval throughout the past century. The introduction of first sound then colour, dwindling audience numbers and stringent legislation post-WWII, before the arrival of television and the beginnings of industry-wide conglomeration mid-century, have all had lasting effects on the industry. Furthermore, rapidly-changing lifestyle choices and the subsequent proliferation of home video technology have continued to erode cinema's hegemonic status. This process intensified at the beginning of the 1980s and continued apace until the turn of the new millennium, after which point the internet and digital infrastructure posed a veritably larger threat to the already-in-flux status quo. This thesis argues that George Lucas has had an equally profound, often overshadowed role in shaping the evolution of the medium beyond pioneering the research and development of filmmaking technology and techniques which have prompted declarations of cinema's latest "death".

Ruminations on the meaning of cinema and its purpose have been similarly fervent throughout its history – most notably opined in the formative observations of André Bazin, a figure whose work informs and underpins much critical film theory. Thus, as Sarah Atkinson (2014) proposes, this discourse must itself be regularly revisited, particularly at a time when the medium faces what is frequently touted as its greatest challenge yet. As we progress further into the digital age, we must question the ongoing role cinema will play and how this affects our continued attempts to define it; can it still be regarded as an art form, or does the rampant global commercialisation of the industry mean cinema should be solely dealt with as an economic enterprise? Perhaps it should be taken purely as a source of escapist entertainment and nothing else, especially in these uncertain times. And yet, considering that film can play a pivotal role in documenting the past and provides marginalised communities an opportunity to raise their voice, one must not neglect its potential as an educational tool for current and future generations alike. Given this plurality of applications, claims that the medium exhibits "a kind of schizophrenic identity" are understandable (Klinger, 2006 p. 2). Furthermore, by revealing such intrinsic tensions, this supposed schizophrenia also serves to colour public perceptions of what exactly cinema stands for (Rehak, 2018 pp. 12 – 13). This is an underlying theme of the thesis and informs the subsequent chapters in different ways. Throughout, it refers primarily to the abstract concept of "cinema as an institution"

however, where appropriate, definitive references are made to in related specific applications – i.e. cinema as a medium via its corporeal apparatus, cinema as an industry, and cinema as the act of viewing a film, communally or alone.

The fundamental attempt to define cinema in the face of its latest transition stimulates much contemporary debate and is a core concern of my thesis. Usefully, this identity struggle presents a duality ripe for critical examination. Philosophical concerns about cinema in this new digital epoch are accompanied by the more tangible effects of digitisation, which the following chapters address. For example, Chapter 2 describes how early disquiet towards digital technology can be traced to the 1960s, existing initially on the periphery of social consciousness before quickly escalating once its presence began to be felt in the media industry more strongly. The so-called "Art and Technology Movement" began to take hold during this decade, openly demonstrating the benefits of computer technology for those willing to adopt emerging tools and techniques (Utterson, 2011). Perhaps most important of these figures, George Lucas recognised the potential such technology promised for filmmakers, and it is the success of his ground-breaking work to advance the field which has informed my decision to place him at the heart of this project. As analysed in the subsequent chapters, having founded his own production company with the explicit aim of overhauling the filmmaking process, Lucas would go on to have an enduring impact on the industry (Rubin, 2006).

The main objective of this thesis is to understand why digitisation has generated such widespread apprehension in the media industry and beyond. In Chapter 2 I take a qualitative approach to contemporary film theory and ask what makes the latest transitional period so unique. Here, I contextualise the ongoing "*digital turn*" (Gaudreault and Marion, 2015 p. 5; original italics) against historical precedence in the development of cinema to suggest that it is but the next revolution in the medium's cyclical evolution. By exploring cinema history in epochal periods I demonstrate how previous economic, legislative, social, and technological factors have created an inter-related series of events shaping the industry's latest transformation. The chapter examines to what extent the status quo has been disrupted, both philosophically and practically. As such, I engage directly with several key effects of digitisation from both categories – ranging from the economic, social, and technical advances and the associated critical discourse – to illustrate how impactful the digital turn has been, both as its own event and in relation to these other influencing factors. Following this evaluation, I conduct an analysis of a wide cross-section of films, initiatives, projects, and techniques illustrating the benefits afforded by the digital turn. Doing so allows me to counter the overwhelmingly negative characterisation of digitisation and suggest that it has instead reinvigorated cinema by breathing new life into the medium.

In Chapter 3 I re-evaluate the pioneering role played by George Lucas in the "digital revolution" as well as his wider contribution to the film industry. I scrutinise Lucas's career in an attempt to understand what motivated him to remodel the filmmaking process.

Investigating his behaviour in this manner allows me to channel and reflect upon the disruption of digitisation from a unique perspective, owing to the fact that he is both artist and copyright holder. I reconsider the apprehension held by artists and content producers towards the democratising potential this technology affords third-parties within the existing framework of the authorship debate. Here I use terms such as “artist” and “author” to represent the singular creative individual responsible for a text, and with Lucas as my focal point, I clearly distinguish between artist and copyright holder where possible but also use him as an example to illustrate how this is not necessarily always straightforward. I use a variety of primary source material to this end, most notably Lucas’s 1988 senate hearing testimonies which have been regularly overlooked in subsequent discussions of his career. This is supplemented with a reappraisal of several key interviews with the director, in which he directly raises the philosophical themes and concerns at the heart of the thesis.

Chapter 4 closely scrutinises how digital filmmaking technology has facilitated the rapid democratisation of the craft and consequently forced power structures to adapt. I begin with a historiography of amateur filmmaking in order to investigate the links between affluence, agency, competence, and technology. Supported by Pierre Bourdieu’s (1993) field relations theory, I demonstrate how economic, social, and technical barriers were put in place in order to create and maintain a divide between amateur and professional filmmaking – effectively attempting to devalue and depict the practice as a frivolous hobby. Moving to a contemporary setting, the chapter continues to explore the links between amateur creativity and technology. I use YouTube as a case study to illustrate how, in its dual-role as beneficiary and facilitator of online video-sharing, it has cultivated a unique cultural status and operational role since the turn of the millennium emblematic of the Web 2.0 experience (Farchy, 2009). Relatedly, I consider how anxieties about authorship, copyright infringement, and piracy have largely informed the reaction of the media industry as their hegemonic supremacy continues to be threatened. For example, juxtaposing interviews with prominent *Star Wars* fan fiction authors and press statements from Lucasfilm, I explore the “moral battle” (Hills, 2002 p. 32) between producers and consumers to reveal underlying anxieties about digitisation within the industry. I also comparatively analyse a number of Lucasfilm-inspired projects to investigate how these fears manifest themselves.

The final chapter seeks to address how the presence of paratextual material has changed over time. It asks to what extent the role played by George Lucas in popularising particular paratextual promotional strategies has affected our relationship with the film-text. As with previous chapters I begin with a historiographical approach to film marketing techniques. This involves analysing how traditional marketing strategies came to be joined by more unorthodox campaigns in the mid-20th century. In addition to a wide range of examples I also carry out statistical analyses of box office figures which reveal how production and promotional policies altered radically following the success of *Star Wars* in 1977. Like Chapter 4, the final section here is a comparative analysis of several case studies

illustrating how digital technology has been successfully integrated into modern-day marketing practices – in particular the heightened importance of social media outlets.

By accomplishing the above objectives, the following chapters provide a new perspective in the timely discourse surrounding the digitisation of the cinematic medium. Focusing on George Lucas, this thesis offers a unique perspective on the debate; its critical reflection of his legacy within the wider evolution of the film industry uses overlooked and underused material relating to his career. As such, the thesis redresses an imbalance in the critical discourse surrounding Lucas, weaving a unique thread in the long-running tapestry that is the evolution of the film industry by focusing on one of its leading historical figures. To this end, I will now provide a review of pertinent literature to construct the critical framework described above.

Chapter 1 – Literature Review

Every new development added to the cinema must, paradoxically, take it nearer to its origins. In short, cinema has not yet been invented! [...] The cinema was born from the converging of [...] various obsessions, that is to say, out of a myth, the myth of total cinema

(Bazin, 2004a pp. 21 – 22)

Lacanian psychoanalysis proposes that humans are “born into a condition of ‘lack’, and subsequently spend the rest of [their] lives trying to overcome this condition” (Storey, 2012 p. 103). As famously espoused in Bazin’s myth of total cinema, there has been a comparable drive by scholars to resolve the inherent incompleteness tied to the medium. Chapter 2 is heavily influenced by these attempts as it investigates this “lack” in detail, describing how the historical evolution of the film industry sets a useful precedent to the current turbulence enveloping it. Indeed, Thomas Elsaesser’s concept of “technical continuation” (1998a p. 50) is useful in demonstrating how each developmental step did not radically revolutionise the status quo overnight, nor did they occur independently from each other – or other elements, for that matter. A number of scholars chronicle how the medium was ultimately able to negate the threat posed by change and benefit from gradual transformations in its technological foundation, despite repeated assertions that cinema had died (Allen and Gomery, 1985; Enticknap, 2005; Gaudreault, 2014; Monaco 2009). At the same time, I also inquire how this adaptability safeguarded the longevity of the burgeoning industry against other factors with the potential to significantly undermine its growth. These include conglomeration (Wyatt, 1994), dwindling audience numbers (Belton, 2009), the expansion of the domestic media market (Darley, 2000; Klinger, 2006), and stringent antitrust legislation (Conant, 1981; De Vany, 2004). Using this established body of work the chapter constructs an epochal history of cinema, within which I contend that its initial immaturity as an institution engendered a level of adaptability and robustness, ensuring early difficulties were not insurmountable.

Anxiety about the continued ontological stability of cinema appears to be justifiable, particularly in the wake of the aforementioned digital turn. The term was coined by André Gaudreault and Philippe Marion (2015) who, reflecting upon the ongoing digitisation of the medium, ask if cinema “has simply made a turn […] or whether it is undergoing a true *mutation*” (2015 p. 5; original italics). However, others have argued that “the digital has come to function less as a technology than as a ‘cultural metaphor’ of crisis and transition” (Elsaesser, 1998c p. 202). Indeed, some claim that not only has digitisation fuelled the “apparently irreversible decline” of the “motion picture *medium*”, but it has equally exacerbated the disappearance of “film *culture*” (Hoberman, 2013 p. 17; original italics). Significantly, this “cultural metaphor” finds its cinematic roots in the B-movie science fiction pictures produced during the mid-20th century (Utterson, 2011). The type of apprehension engulfing these films intensified frenetically in the 1990s as fears of the Millennium Bug coincided with a marked increase in the number of films explicitly dealing with similar themes – a large proportion of which also demonstrated the capabilities of rapidly-improving digital filmmaking technology (Arthur, 2001; Pierson, 2002; Rodowick, 2007; Willis, 2005).

Naturally, much continues to be written about the philosophical and practical effects of digitisation which exemplifies the above cultural metaphor. It has been argued that the digital imaging methods introduced in this evolution are “reconfiguring the process of film

production, how things get done, when, and by whom. These are significant changes in the industrial and professional context of cinema" (Prince, 2004 p. 30). Although some of these are related to longstanding influences there are, nevertheless, unique challenges issuing directly from the digital turn. For example, digital distribution and disintermediation have been facilitated by advances in internet infrastructure and digital file-sharing, resulting in the narrowing of traditional release windows (Franklin, 2012; Iordanova, 2012; Perren, 2013). And yet, although these have existed in some form since the early 2000s, the sustained popularity of going to the cinema to watch a film suggests that the hyperbole surrounding these recent phenomena is overblown (Clarke, 2019; Grundström, 2018). At the same time, however, the ongoing multiplication of digital video on demand streaming services – mirroring the cable TV wars of the 1980s and 1990s – indicates a clear shift in audience consumption patterns that multimedia corporations must remain aware of (Grand View Research, 2019).

Relatedly, scholars have lamented the "disembodiment" and "relocation" of cinema as an adverse effect of the digital turn. However, history shows that film had previously transcended the conventional theatre as early as 1933, and that recent ventures such as Cannes in a Van and Popup Cinema simply build on an established albeit underdeveloped tradition (Bellis, 2019; Casetti, 2016; Rombes, 2009). Relatedly, newer attempts to promote unconventional approaches to film viewing – with heightened immersion and interactivity – likewise constitute a modern reimagining of older techniques (Grimes, 1993; Kirke et al, 2018; Willoughby, 2007). Given this historical precedent, it therefore seems unlikely that attempts to digitally recreate the past threaten the fundamental survival of the film industry.

As a figurehead of the digital revolution, George Lucas is lauded for having "been at the forefront of digital cinema as both a vocal proponent of the technological change underway and a driving force in shaping and accelerating that change" (Taylor and Hsu, 2003 p. 193). However, I would suggest that his equally significant role as creator of the phenomenally lucrative *Star Wars* franchise overshadows a critical analysis of his wider accomplishments and behaviours. While there are invaluable accounts extensively chronicling his trailblazing cinematic efforts (Jones, 2016; Rubin, 2006; Taylor, 2016), these are considerably marginalised by the sheer volume of commercial and critical *Star Wars*-centric material – which is, in itself, incredibly useful. Indeed, recent collections provide a functional way to approach fandom, participatory culture, and reception studies in a new light (Kapell and Lawrence, 2006; Proctor and McCulloch, 2019).

Even the resurgent interest and evaluative reappraisals of the New Hollywood period, during which Lucas emerged, do little beyond citing the financial success of *Star Wars* and lamenting his role in the consolidation of the blockbuster model (Elsaesser et al, 2004; Krämer, 2006; Langford, 2010). At the same time, Robert Allen and Douglas Gomery's (1985) deconstruction of the so-called "Great Man Theory" reminds us that "by foregrounding the role of the individual in technological change, the "great man" theory excludes or greatly

reduces consideration of other factors" (1985 p. 111). In order to avoid simply eulogising Lucas, then, the thesis uses his pursuit of creative autonomy and revisionist tendencies to engage with philosophical debates long-held in film theory which he helped to reignite – primarily authorship, cultural heritage, and the preservation of cinema history.

Of critical importance is Lucas's senate judiciary appearance in 1988, at which he advocated for greater legal protection for an artist's rights – especially directors – and, ironically, warned against the pitfalls of digitisation (United States G.P.O., 1988). His original spoken and written testimonies, largely overlooked in existing discourse, provide an indispensable opportunity to re-evaluate Lucas's career and his status as unofficial leader of the digital revolution, at a time when the introduction of such tools proved greatly controversial in the media industry (Edgerton, 2000). This is underpinned by Walter Benjamin's formative essay on mechanical reproduction originally published in 1936, the prescient themes of which are updated and applied to the work of art in the age of digital reproduction.

Any discussion of the controversial theory of authorship lends itself to the existing academic framework, encompassing developmental milestones like the German *Autorenfilm*, the work of the *Cahiers du Cinéma* collective, Andrew Sarris's *auteur* theory, and the post-structuralist death of the author (Barthes, 1977; Garwood, 2002; Sarris, 1962; Wollen, 1972). Although not concerned with extrapolating the intricacies of this debate, the thesis uses this discourse to juxtapose Lucas's antithetical stance on authorship and his well-documented behaviour with collaborators, ultimately revealing a problematic relationship between the two. The evidence presented throughout combines to create an unsurprisingly complex picture of Lucas which dovetails with many of the topics discussed here. His maturing views on art, for example, belie the misconception of him as a financially-motivated corporate overlord and reveal a genuine passion for the craft. Furthermore, his earnest partnership with employees like Tom Holman and Howard Kessler demonstrates an adaptability and desire to fulfil industry-wide change. Additionally, Lucas has historically sought to downplay the revolutionary upheaval of digitisation, claiming that "[d]igital is like saying, "What kind of camera are you going to use? Are you going to use Panavision or an Arriflex? Are you going to write with a pen or on your little laptop?" I mean, it doesn't change anything" (in Kelly and Parisi, 1997).

The results of Lucas's attempts to make filmmaking accessible, combined with wider industrial and socio-economic reformations, have fuelled longstanding tensions between producers and consumers. Pierre Bourdieu's (1993) seminal field relations theory is a useful tool in demonstrating how this hierarchisation of filmmaking – imposed and maintained by a relatively small elite – has traditionally safeguarded a fabricated divide between amateur and professional. Historically, amateur productivity in the form of filmmaking has remained largely marginalised, overlooked, and underappreciated. Numerous attempts have been made to understand this trivialisation; some accounts find that the media played a significant role in

popularising amateur filmmaking as a “casual leisure activity” while, at the same time, industry standardisation created an unrealistic aesthetic template unattainable by many wannabe filmmakers (Fox, 2004; Stebbins, 1982; Shand, 2009).

A growing body of work seeks to counter this by retrospectively re-assessing the value of amateur films in its diverse applications. It suggests that changes in social attitudes towards amateur productivity have been as important as the technological advances enabling a wider range of communities to engage with it (Craven et al, 2009; Ishizuka et al, 2008; Rascaroli et al, 2014; Young, 2008). In particular, the growth of sophisticated digital infrastructure has played a large role in this, especially the internet. Henry Jenkins (2006) claims that it

> has become a site of consumer participation that includes many unauthorised and unanticipated ways of relating to media content […]. Allowing consumers to interact with media under controlled circumstances is one thing; allowing them to participate in the production and distribution of cultural goods – on their own terms – is something else altogether (2006 p. 137).

Moreover, ongoing upheaval “is marked by grassroots media production and distribution, undermining the hierarchical structures of the traditional media industry and challenging notions of copyright and intellectual property” (Hartwig, 2012 p. 216). Unsurprisingly, this raises a number of concerns. The democratising potential afforded by emerging technologies prompts a contemporary reappraisal of Bourdieu’s model: that films can now be independently shot, edited, and distributed online in a matter of hours constitutes a palpable threat to the established production pattern. The work of amateur filmmakers is now no longer consigned to domestic exhibition for family and friends; it can be disseminated to a global audience online with relative ease. Increasingly affordable and sophisticated user-friendly technology has driven up the quality of such work. Additionally, traditional funding methods can now be bypassed thanks to the recent phenomenon of crowdfunding.

And yet, it must be noted that this democratisation has been experienced unevenly in society, mirroring to an extent the nascence of amateur filmmaking at the beginning of the 20th century (Burgess and Green, 2009; Müller, 2009; Papacharissi, 2010). That is to say, even in locales which have experienced a high level of democratisation, new hierarchies have emerged which undermine idealistic visions of digital media and instead create a multi-tiered scale of “amateurism”. Furthermore, amateur content occupying the contentious category of transformative fiction raises its own set of philosophical and practical questions about copyright and creative free play (Tushnet, 2017). Well-documented and longstanding problems for authors of subversive fan fiction (Brooker, 2002), concerns about the unauthorised appropriation of copyrighted material and its uncontrolled dissemination online have reignited hotly-contested debates about the right of free play in the digital age (Coppa, 2006; Fuchs and Philips, 2016; Hellekson and Busse et al, 2006; Jenkins, 2013). George Lucas’s ostensible leadership of the digital filmmaking revolution thus offers a unique and

hitherto overlooked opportunity to re-examine his reaction to those appropriating his intellectual property.

Building upon the influential writings of Ferdinand de Saussure, Mikhail Bakhtin, and Julia Kristeva, paratextual philosophy exists in relation to a larger framework of semiotic interpretation – known as intertextuality – which scrutinises the relationship between media texts (Allen, 2000; Worton and Still et al, 1990). Paratextual analysis was introduced to literary theory by Gérard Genette (1997) who asserts that

> the paratext in all its forms is a discourse that is fundamentally heteronomous, auxiliary, and dedicated to the service of something other than itself that constitutes its raison d'être. This something is the text. […] the paratextual element is always subordinate to "its" text, and this functionality determines the essence of its appeal and its existence (Genette, 1997 p. 12).

The thesis uses the above postulation in a critical re-assessment of the evolution of film marketing. Supported by more contemporary re-interpretations of paratextual theory, it seeks to understand how digitisation has changed the art of selling films to the public (Gray, 2010; Harvey, 2015; Kerrigan, 2010).

Often, emerging promotional techniques were tied to growing audience expectations and a need to capture imaginations. As such, they regularly sought to dazzle or overwhelm the public by promising an unforgettable theatrical experience (Castle, 1992; Boorstin, 2012; McGee, 1989). History also shows that the evolution of film marketing was inextricably linked to wider factors influencing the industry – especially conglomeration. Ultimately, this culminated in the emergence of the blockbuster filmmaking model at the end of the 1970s which, under the stewardship of George Lucas and Steven Spielberg, effectively redefined how films were produced and promoted (Lewis, 2007).

This model was quickly adopted and refined by studios in the wake of Lucas's successful use of paratextual merchandise to develop the *Star Wars* universe and grow its commercial brand. Box office figures for the following decades reveal that blockbuster, high concept, and franchise films came to dominate the global marketplace as transnational media conglomerates continued to grow (Block and Wilson, 2010; Loudenback and Guerrasio, 2018; Wyatt, 1994). As the interests of these corporations became more diverse, emerging promotional platforms became integrated into new marketing styles (Grainge and Johnson, 2015; Kernan, 2004; Marich, 2013).

Furthermore, paratextual material developed a key secondary role in addition to its fundamentally economic function. Despite initial scepticism, multimedia conglomerates have turned to the phenomena of transmedia storytelling across their subsidiaries. This ensures that franchise instalments can encounter each other across media and intertwine in an indefinite narrative – as well as remaining in public consciousness much longer (Jenkins, 2006).

Chapter 2 – Cinema and the Digital Turn

What people have called "cinema" for over a century has seen a series of technological mutations throughout its history. Whether when sound arrived or widescreen formats were introduced [...] every new technology has, in its own way, gradually and lastingly turned upside down the way in which films are produced and distributed, along with their reception by viewers

(Gaudreault and Marion, 2015 p. 3)

2.1 – Introduction

> ***One consistent lesson from the history of film theory is that there has never been a general consensus conceiving the answer to the question "What is cinema?" And for this reason the evolving thought on cinema in the twentieth century has persisted in a continual state of identity crisis***
>
> (Rodowick, 2007 p. 11)

This chapter begins by surveying the technological mutations experienced by cinema throughout its existence which reflect the ambiguity of its definition, as identified above by D. N. Rodowick (2007) who, like many of the other scholars cited here, explicitly channels André Bazin in an attempt to answer the fundamental question "what is cinema?". As will become clear, the uncertainty surrounding the meaning of "cinema" and how society defines it is a result of the medium's origins and its advancement, both of which also feed its "continual state of identity crisis". Naturally, this necessitates an analysis of the medium's development from its primordial state, and the chapter notes how the convergence and refinement of pre-existing technologies culminated in the multinational industry which exists today. Relatedly, this leads into an investigation of how the medium adapted in the face of these new innovations along its journey of self-discovery.

The chapter subsequently turns to reconsider the contemporary challenge of digital media by contemplating the critical discourse associated with it. Here, I engage equally with the philosophical and practical implications of digital technology in order to understand why this purported "crisis" is perhaps more substantial than those preceding it. As Markos Hadjioannou (2012) observes:

> cinema has undergone a technological transition that is not an advancement of an existing format […]. Rather, the recent transition has challenged the standard technological base of the moving image entirely […] by introducing a novel computational environment – *new* media (2012 pp. 1 – 2).

Lastly, the chapter counters the dominant narrative lamenting the digitisation of cinema and the rise of digital filmmaking. The final section identifies to what extent this latest technological transition has changed the relationship between cinema and viewer. It explores the benefits attributed to digital technology which are often overshadowed in critical discourse seemingly preoccupied with the disappearance and destabilisation of cinema. It uses a number of case studies to illustrate that although cinema "no longer occupies the hegemonic position it once had" (Gaudreault and Marion, 2015 p. 146), the medium is very-much alive thanks to emerging technologies which encourage and promote the dissemination of the film-text in new locales and via new consumption methods.

2.2 – The More Cinema Changes, the More It Stays the Same

> ***[C]inema never dies: its fabric is so elastic that it can always regain its shape after being stretched one way or another. Of course, something in cinema always dies every time there is a great upheaval, but the medium adapts and changes to meet the needs of the new conjecture in new ways***
>
> (Gaudreault, 2014 p. 287)

Certain approaches in film theory overwhelmingly propose that cinema has existed in a perennial state of evolutionary self-reflection; that its history has been "*punctuated by moments when its media identity has been radically called into question*" (Gaudreault and Marion, 2015 p. 3; original italics). Indeed, while the apparatus of "[c]inema has continuously changed over its history" (Parikka, 2012 p. 9), John Belton (2014) asserts that "[p]redictions of the death of cinema have been with us as long as the cinema itself" (2014 p. 460). Thomas Elsaesser (2012) provides an opportunity to link these two phenomena when he posits that "the 'death' of Hollywood is a "cyclical" prediction, usually indicating a major change in either the mix of media technologies sustaining and surrounding the cinema or in the legal-institutional frameworks" which surround it (2012 p. 78). As I discuss later in the chapter, the palpable sense of anxiety and apprehension towards change in the medium has increased markedly since the turn of the new millennium – primarily due to the widespread technological changes in motion. A historical analysis contextualising the evolution of cinema within a wider media landscape usefully highlights a range of important economic, legislative, social, and technological elements which have each served to profoundly alter cinema and the wider sphere of media entertainment.

It is important to remember that while "cinema has periodically spawned radical attempts from within to overthrow it as an institution" (Belton, 2014 p. 461), these acts of supposed self-sabotage did not occur in a vacuum. This first section thus analyses the combined results of these internal and external obstacles, with a view to later identify how the aforementioned "*digital turn*" is different (Gaudreault and Marion, 2015 p. 5; original italics). My subsequent analysis divides cinema history into three epochs, during which times the medium faced uniquely distinct but nevertheless inter-related difficulties on its journey of self-discovery. The first of these investigates primordial cinema; that is, the convergence of media technologies which eventually grew into a burgeoning industry. Historically, this began at the end of the 19th century and continued into the early-to-mid-20th, some 50 years wherein filmmaking codes, conventions, and practices developed alongside professional standards and an intricate economic network to culminate in the classical Hollywood era. What follows in the second era is a period of substantial legislative and social change post-WWII which, coupled with the arrival of television shortly thereafter, questioned cinema's supremacy as the dominant entertainment medium. Subsequently there began a gradual proliferation of domestic media technology including home video, which brought the film into

the domestic sphere, and video games, which further fragmented audiences. As the final epoch illustrates, technological advancements within this market in the late 20th century continued to erode cinema's ever-diminishing status by providing the public myriad alternatives to enjoy in their leisure time.

Exhibition, Standardisation, and Technical Continuation

Thomas Elsaesser (1998) reminds us that "cinema, far from being inevitable or having a manifest destiny" did not spontaneously materialise overnight (1998 p. 46). Nor, too, did it emerge from or into a void. Rather, the technological convergence leading to the "birth" of the medium was the by-product of decades of research and development within several initially separate fields, involving numerous notable figures each working without an overarching desire or vision to create the cinema as we know it:

> camera, film strip and projection were at first seen as the technical continuation of already existing practices, which is to say, often as 'improvements' of that which was already known and in use, and not at all as the epistemic break for which we so often take the cinema when looking back (Elsaesser, 1998 p. 50).

Furthermore, this process of "technical continuation" was a relatively protracted one on the road to dedicated theatrical exhibition for mass audiences. Leo Enticknap's account (2005) details the inherent incompleteness frequently associated with the medium and how financial imperatives played a key part in its cyclical evolution. For example, film exhibition in purpose-built facilities remained significantly underdeveloped prior to 1914 primarily because "[c]ultural technologies which involved communal viewing […] were not a market in which" leading film exhibitors "had taken any systematic interest" (2005 p. 133). That is, exhibitor reluctance to enter the market was fuelled by a fundamental scepticism towards its long-term economic viability. This is corroborated by James Monaco (2009) who similarly concedes that cinema was seen as nothing more than a "sideshow gimmick" which would take some 16 years to evolve into a "full-fledged economic art" (2009 p. 254).

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the lengthy progression towards dedicated film theatres was beset by competing exhibition formats and technologies, the proliferation of which meant that the market quickly became flooded (Monaco, 2009 p. 257). Furthermore, the commitment to one system over another represented a considerably precarious investment for would-be exhibitors; because there was no guarantee that their chosen system would be future-proofed, failure would entail considerably damaging consequences. In addition to this, technological limitations like the lack of widespread access to electricity stunted the spread of standardised exhibition. Eventually, however, sustained infrastructural and technological improvements led to a period of systematisation. During this time "film exhibition gradually evolved from a cottage industry onto an industrial footing", and this would be "mirrored […]

across all sectors of the industry" as cinema quickly professionalised itself (Enticknap, 2005 p. 138).

A similar pattern can be seen in the equally lengthy process of technical continuation involved in the medium's transition to sound, with attempts to combine sound and the moving image traced back to the late 1800s (Enticknap, 2005 pp. 247 – 248). Reflecting upon its slow adoption, Susan Hayward (2006) insists that "[a]t the time, there was no sense of urgency to go to the costly lengths of implementing a sound system, since cinema was proving sufficiently profitable in its silent mode" (Hayward, 2006 p. 358). As before, then, it is perhaps unsurprising to learn that economic imperatives underpinned this latest proposed technological advancement. It would once again be growing international competition which revealed the potential value of this new "gimmick" and inspired studios to adopt this burgeoning technology (ibid).

Alan Crosland's *The Jazz Singer* (1927) is frequently recognised as a veritable turning point in the evolution of cinema. Its successful combination of synchronised dialogue, soundtrack, and visuals in a feature-length picture produced by a major studio indeed marked a significant shift in the transition away from the silent era. However, as Robert Allen and Douglas Gomery (1985) argue, claiming that the success of *The Jazz Singer* led to the immediate and universal adoption of sound "fails to examine the complexity of the transformation" (1985 p. 116) – a transformation equally as tortuous as the passage to standardised exhibition for mass audiences. Instead, Allen and Gomery are openly "sceptical about the ability of one film […] to alter the course of history" and contextualise its emergence within the industry's much longer-term "conversion to sound" (ibid). Nevertheless, it had only been a year since Crosland's previous picture, *Don Juan* (1926), became "Hollywood's first major sound film" with a synchronised soundtrack for "background music and effects" (Stephens and Wanamaker, 2010 p. 25), a clear indication that studios were keen to explore the creative possibilities afforded by this new technology.

Predictably, this latest "conversion" generated a high level of industrial competition as studios sought to quickly become market leaders. It was chiefly thanks to the "scientists and resources of the world's largest company, American Telephone and Telegraph" that a "satisfactory sound-on-film system" could be developed, but only after 10 years of research and development (Allen and Gomery, 1985 p. 117). Until then, film studios – those with commensurate levels of financial clout and influence, and those most likely to benefit from the introduction of sound – initially remained to varying degrees unable, unlikely, or unwilling to develop a comparable system: external input would be necessary in order to allow cinema to take its next evolutionary step (see Bordwell, 1985a). Compelled by shared strategic financial aims, these corporate alliances tease the earliest stirrings of large-scale industrial collaboration, paving the way for conglomeration and meaningfully and repeatedly shaping the history of the film industry in the decades to come. More immediately following *The Jazz Singer*, "[t]he success of these endeavours was apparent" and this effectively opened up the

possibility for a “wholesale conversion” to sound as early as May 1928 (Bordwell, 1985a p. 536). Allen and Gomery affirm that it took slightly longer, until September 1929, for the “full transformation of sound [to be] completed”, at which point “Hollywood would subsequently only produce talkies” (1985 pp. 123 – 124). This transformation was, nevertheless, “greeted by many critics, filmmakers and theorists as the death knell of the cinema – that is, the end of a certain kind of cinema, the silent cinema, the cinema of montage and expressionistic mise-en-scene” (Belton, 2014 p. 460). Evidently, then, the introduction of sound did not bring about the demise – immediate or long term – of the film industry. As per Belton’s caveat, it instead marked a considerable milestone in the process of technical continuation shaping cinema, with another quickly coming into focus.

Becky Sharp (1935) is widely regarded as the first full-length feature film shot entirely using three-strip Technicolor (Enticknap, 2005). Despite this historical feat, it is frequently overshadowed by others made using the same process which seemed to better-illustrate the benefits of Technicolor and ensured they were received “often with great success” (Hayward, 2006 p. 87). Relatedly, Sarah Atkinson (2014) has reasoned that

> advertising and branding imperatives have driven new cinematic forms, and have dictated particular aesthetics and audience engagements. In the emergent period of any new media, there is a tendency to showcase the technological capabilities of a form by presenting story as spectacle (2014 p. 3).

From this point of view it seems reasonable to assume that the “imperatives” of those marketing the emerging format saw a film like *The Wizard of Oz* (1939) as a better opportunity to exhibit its “technological capabilities”. Indeed, the film’s fantastical generic conventions permit an overt visual juxtaposition between Dorothy’s monochrome Kansas and the rich, Technicolor Land of Oz. At the same time it also invites viewers to acknowledge and reflect upon the contrast between cinema’s démodé, monochrome past and its brightly promising, full-colour future. Crucially, the success of *The Wizard of Oz* and other Technicolor features like *A Star Is Born* (1937) and *Gone With the Wind* (1939) propelled the format to the top of the market, one which the company “virtually monopolized […] until the early 1950s” (Bordwell, 1985b p. 593). Ultimately, the positive reception of these films thus manifested the profitability of colour features and encouraged cinema’s latest evolutionary stage.

As with the transition to sound, however, it would be inaccurate to declare that cinema changed completely overnight. Certainly, while the films cited above premiered at the end of the 1930s, the transition to colour must be contextualised within the overarching historical narrative. 1939 may be cited as a key year at which point “color could finally achieve techniques which until then were the province of black and white photography” (Allen and Gomery, 1985 p. 127). Yet, Enticknap traces the origins of colour photography back to 1861 and the work of James Clerk Maxwell (2005 pp. 79 – 80). Not only does this

again support Elsaesser's theory of technical continuation, it also reveals how these changes often required decades of refinement before they were deemed suitable for widespread adoption. Clearly, the respective introductions of sound and colour did not kill the film industry.

Reflecting upon the "elasticity" of the medium, André Gaudreault (2014) instead attests that "cinema adapted to this new technology and the new relations that this technology imposed" to subsequently flourish (2014 p. 287). Moreover, that contemporary audiences continue to be exposed to silent cinema – famously in the award-winning *The Artist* (2011), other films like *Silent Times* (2018), and in dedicated festivals such as the Globe International Silent Film Festival (GISFF) – is testament to its enduring allure. Likewise, while *Becky Sharp* occupies a place in film history analogous to that of *The Jazz Singer,* it would be neglectful to suggest that its release marked the definitive end of black-and-white filmmaking. Its persistence in films as diverse *The Last Picture Show* (1971), *Rumble Fish* (1983), *Schindler's List* (1993), *American History X* (1998), *Nebraska* (2013), and *Roma* (2018) indicates a persistent appreciation for this aesthetic style. Whether affected by artistic, economic, or narrative choices, the continued use of black-and-white belies the dominant narrative lamenting its sudden death in the 20th century.

Conglomeration, Legislation, and the Loss of Hegemony

As Hollywood's transition to Technicolor gained traction in the 1940s, the industry faced punitive new regulations towards the end of the decade which would have long-lasting consequences. The effects of technical continuations in sound and colour were largely limited to the formal aesthetics of the films produced in their wake; those resulting from the 1948 Hollywood Antitrust Case would reach wider, impacting the distribution, exhibition, and production of films – as well as the internal structure of the industrial studio system. An ardent critic of the legislation, Arthur De Vany (2004) describes it as "a mistake" (2004 p. 141) before going on to summarise the ensuing fallout:

> [t]he major studios were required to sell their theaters and change the way they licensed motion pictures to exhibitor [sic]. The theater chain [sic] newly formed by the sale of the studio theaters were forced to sell some of their theaters, and were prohibited from acquiring or constructing theaters without permission of the United States District Court. Most of the studios were barred from acquiring, owning, or operating theaters unless the court approved of the action (2004 p. 143).

Essentially, in addition to disassembling the intricate production-distribution-exhibition network which had gradually been built up over the past two decades, new guidelines required that Hollywood now operated under the external oversight of the government. In another evaluation of the legislation, Michael Conant (1981) concludes that, under the pretence of promoting fair competition among studios, this effectively "brought to an end

decades of control of the motion picture industry in violation of antitrust laws" (1981 p. 79). It could be argued here that – to appropriate Belton's phraseology from earlier – this ruling represents a considerably radical *external* attempt to overthrow Hollywood as an institution. This episode directly reveals the fundamental tension existing at the very heart of cinema's struggle for identity. As Douglas Gomery (2000) reminds us, the film industry, by its very nature, exists "as a collection of businesses seeking profits through film production, film distribution, and the presentation of movies to audiences" (2000 p. 19). Consequently, it seems inevitable that financial interests have always played a key role in the production of films. Prior to the introduction of the new laws, the studio system had developed relatively freely in such a way as to manage risk, maximise profits, and offset potential losses. However, the "little respect" demonstrated by legislators in the Paramount case in their attempts to equate the practice of making and selling a film to that of selling consumable goods amplifies concerns about commodification within the industry (De Vany, 2004 p. 140).

De Vany's core argument that the Paramount case directly contributed to the demise of the studio system mid-century is compelling (2004 p. 172). Nevertheless, it would be negligent to overlook other key influences which coalesced to make this an increasingly difficult time for the industry. These include "lengthy post-war strikes against the studios by labor unions, changing patterns in leisure-time entertainment that resulted in a sharp drop in attendance […], competition with television, and the rise of independent production" (Belton, 2009 p. 82). Facing these challenges, along with the Paramount Decrees, Hollywood is described as having "inaugurated a new era in the cinema – an era of big-budget, widescreen blockbusters" (Belton, 2009 p. 322). Ironically, industry-wide conglomeration began to take root during this time in response. Conant insists that "[t]he highly fluctuating income of motion picture distributors" due to heightened "uncertainty of public reception of each film and the distributors' need for sources of risk capital ma[d]e film distributing corporations likely targets for control by conglomerates" (1981 p. 92). In short, as well as the factors identified thus far, the 1950s saw the origins of a new filmmaking style which relied on the experience of watching a film on the big screen – something investigated further in Chapter 5 – while co-productions and conglomeration, aimed at offsetting the rising financial risks associated with production, also began to take hold.

Pivotally, as Hollywood responded to the effects of the Paramount decision, the arrival of television heralded the next serious external challenge for cinema. Thomas Elsaesser and Kay Hoffmann (1998) posit that by the end of the 1960s, cinema was once more "pronounced dead" because "[t]elevision, like a biblical Cain, had slain his brother Abel, bewitching the mass audience and provoking an exodus […] from the movie houses to the living rooms" (1998 p. 7). Gaudreault and Marion comparably assert that "[w]ith the arrival of television, the "spell" of the "classical mode of cinematic proceedings" was broken", and television "thus brought about the end of this model's exclusive reign" (2015 p. 128). Nonetheless, this new medium would, in fact, provide the much-needed impetus for a short-

lived reinvigoration of Hollywood following the destabilisation of the studio system. Furthermore, cinema and television would enter into an interdependent albeit competitive relationship with each other following its proliferation into the domestic sphere. The earlier literature review discussed how the "competition" between cinema and television has inspired an engaging field of scholarly debate replete with metaphor and symbolism. Regardless of how one chooses to allegorise their association, it is clear that both media continue to share a symbiotic link. Indeed, as proclaimed by John Ellis (1992), cinema and television "continue to co-exist however precariously. TV has not superseded cinema; cinema has not rendered TV redundant" (Ellis, 1992 p. 175). This connection has become increasingly complicated in the present day, thanks to the sophistication of home media and, in particular, digital video on demand (VOD) and streaming services.

Hollywood quickly began to suffer the effects of its over-reliance on blockbuster films. In an effort to entice viewers back to cinema screens Peter Biskind (1998) recounts how studios turned to young, exciting filmmakers who they felt would be able to reignite their fortunes following the success of *Bonnie and Clyde* (1967) and *The Graduate* (1967). For Biskind, these two films reportedly "sent tremors through the industry" by demonstrating what could be achieved by placing more faith in the creative talent (1998 p. 15). He continues, noting that they were quickly followed by a slew of equally groundbreaking films – including *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968), *Easy Rider* (1969), *M*A*S*H* (1970), and *The French Connection* (1971) – to informally inaugurate the New Hollywood "movement" (ibid). Cinema thus underwent its latest period of reinvention, this time at the hands of emerging radical directors who all "enjoyed more power, prestige, and wealth than they ever had before" (ibid). This cabal consisted of figures like Robert Altman, Hal Ashby, Francis Ford Coppola, George Lucas, Mike Nichols, and Martin Scorsese whose combined works, benefitting from the redistribution of power and "changes to the rating system in 1968" (Elsaesser, 2012 p. 23), revolutionised the content appearing onscreen. This would, however, be short-lived. Following some ten years' worth of unconventional, fresh storytelling and the uncompromising treatment of X-rated themes in films like *Rosemary's Baby* (1968), *Midnight Cowboy* (1969), *The Godfather* (1972), *Mean Streets* (1973) and *Chinatown* (1974), the industry ultimately turned to a revitalised commercially-oriented model of filmmaking.

The blockbuster model was reinvented in the mid-1970s and effectively resulted in the subsidence of Hollywood's New Wave. Justin Wyatt (1994) contends that this high concept style of filmmaking is directly linked to intensified conglomeration since the '50s: "[t]he conglomeration of the industry was accompanied by changes within the "product" of the industry" (1994 p. 71). That is to say, wider industrial factors continued to influence the content and aesthetic of films being produced; as noted earlier, for example, the arrival of television prompted a multiplicity of widescreen formats which sought to exploit the technical superiority of the big screen. The New Wave was itself underpinned by financial motivations, with directors given much more creative control over their projects at the expense of large

budgets. Likewise the return to the commercial blockbuster model was a result of increased "accountability" being placed on studio subsidiaries by their multinational parent corporations, whose aims placed financial profits above anything else (Wyatt, 1994 p. 156). Analysed in more detail in Chapter 5, this primarily took hold of the industry following the unprecedented financial successes of first *Jaws* (1975) and *Star Wars* (1977) – both films having placed ancillary material at the core of their marketing campaigns to supplement box office receipts.

Domestic Media and the Rise of the Computer

Despite Hollywood's commercial revitalisation at the hands of George Lucas and Steven Spielberg in the 1970s, it has been suggested that the threat posed by the growth of television and home media over the next 10 – 15 years constituted a veritable "crisis in cinema" (Hoffmann, 1998 p. 248). Accordingly, "speculation was rife about the decline of the hegemony of classical cinema" as a result of "changes in film reception […] and the parallel regrouping of the family audience in the home", apparent indicators that "cinema was indeed being replaced" (Elsaesser, 2004 p. 81). Alarmingly, "[i]t was even argued that, due to the combination of television, the video camera, and the domestic VCR, cinema had become obsolete" (ibid). These affirmations are supported by Karina Aveyard (2016) who contends that the introduction of the VCR "really embedded home viewing as a widespread practice" because it was both "affordable" and could seamlessly "connect with existing household technology" (2016 p. 143). Not only did it allow audiences to "watch a far greater variety of content", it also "liberated them from the restrictions of cinema schedules and the timing of television broadcasts" (ibid). Consequently, "its proliferation troubled many academics, filmmakers and critics who were concerned about the increasing overlap between the once separate domains of film and television" (ibid). It seems ironic here that an "overlap" between film and television is cited as a fundamental aspect of the anxiety towards the latter, particularly given that cinema itself is a result of various technological combinations, continuations and, indeed, overlaps.

Equally incongruous are claims that the expansion of the home media market was facilitated by the same conglomerates lamenting shrinkage within the film industry. Nevertheless, the diffusion of domestic media technology throughout the 1980s benefited from "transformations pushed by certain commercial and technological innovations" which progressively "began to favor multinational corporate players on the global stage" (Elsaesser, 2012 p. 239). Belton similarly acknowledges that the spate "of acquisitions and mergers that characterized Hollywood in the 1980s and 1990s" was engineered to directly facilitate the interests of massive multinational corporations:

> [a]s major players in the industry divested themselves of companies that had little or no relation to the emerging media industry, they sought "synergy".

> Hardware producers of VCRs such as Sony and Matsushita bought software producers such as Columbia and Universal (2002 p. 106).

Once more, then, the role of industrial conglomeration facilitating the rise of global media houses interested in "synergy" between their subsidiaries has had an overwhelming effect on the market. In addition to the developments described above this decade also witnessed the birth of cable TV as part of corporate desires to extend their influence in the "emerging media industry". As noted by Michelle Hilmes (1990) this began with the launch of Home Box Office (HBO) in 1972 (1990 p. 300). HBO would slowly grow as the decade progressed, and a number of competitors emerged along the way against a backdrop of intensified "[v]ertical integration" which rivalled the formation of the studio system in the 1920s (Hilmes, 1990 p. 301). Naturally, home media and cable TV became more accessible throughout the 1990s, growing in popularity and further fragmenting audiences. The rampant "concentration of industrial power among a select group of multinational players" (Lewis, 2001 p. 2) combined with rising production costs to significantly heighten the accountability placed on film studio subsidiaries. Precariously, cinema also faced a dual-pronged attack on its already-suffering hegemony from the computer and the internet (Klinger, 2006 pp. 192 – 194). Not to forget videogames which, having debuted to great success with *Pong* in the early 1970s (McGonigal, 2011 p. 37), benefited greatly from sophisticated computer technology to become another competitor within the increasingly crowded domestic media sphere (Darley, 2000 p. 28). As will be discussed later, continued advances within the videogame market have led to an engaging relationship between it and cinema, which to an extent mirrors that between cinema and television.

Together, these nascent digital media stimulated a level of apprehension felt within the industry and beyond, inspiring a series of films which are emblematic of this cultural trepidation. For Paul Arthur (2001), this type of anxiety-ridden storytelling allegorically "[e]nvisioning the death of cinema" is "a talisman for nineties cinema" (2001 p. 345). Chuck Tryon (2009) recognises that this is predominantly evident in "science fiction and fantasy films" released during the decade, clearly thanks to their generic conventions which "provided a unique site for thinking about the role of digital effects in reshaping cinematic narratives and in rethinking the definition of film as a medium" (2009 p. 39). Holly Willis (2005) likewise argues that "[i]n the flurry of digitally enhanced feature films that emerged during the 1990s, several encapsulated the burgeoning cultural hopes and anxieties wrought by the intersection of computers, image production, and the real" (2005 pp. 12 – 13). *The Net* (1995), *Virtuosity* (1995), *Hackers* (1995), and *Strange Days* (1995) are cited as examples which combine archetypal conventions often associated with the crime, science-fiction, and thriller genres, alongside the prominent use of the internet and virtual reality to depict the potential drawbacks of such technology. For Willis, these films in particular epitomise "some of the anxieties of the Hollywood film industry, which in the mid-1990s faced

massive change as the significance of digital technology gradually dawned on producers, distributors, and exhibitors" (2005 p. 13). Rodowick uses a similar collection of films – *Dark City* (1998), *The Matrix* (1999), *The Thirteenth Floor* (1999), and *eXistenZ* (1999) – to assert that

> digital versus analog was the heart of narrative conflict of these films, as if cinema were fighting for its very existence. The replacement of the analog world by a digital simulation functions here as an allegorical conflict wherein cinema struggles to reassert or redefine its identity in the face of a new representational technology that threatens to overwhelm it (2007 p. 4).

Here I would add *Toy Story* (1995) to the list of films which deal with the anxiety accompanying change. As the "first feature-length computer synthesised film" (Darley, 2000 p. 20), it demonstrated what digital technology could do without the need for physical actors filmed in live action. Furthermore, its plot directly channels the overarching critical narrative: while it overtly allegorises America's modernisation during the space-race of the 1950s and '60s, this is a historical precedent mirroring the contemporary transition away from physical media to the virtual world. The identity struggles and fears of replacement exhibited by cowboy-doll protagonist Woody are reflective of Rodowick's above observations; the world Woody knows and is familiar with is being replaced, not by a digital simulation, but by a nevertheless radical new one in which he finds himself dislodged and his existing relationships destabilised with the arrival of a potential usurper in the form of astronaut Buzz Lightyear. That Woody and Buzz ultimately learn to coexist suggests a positive albeit idealistic metaphor for analogue and digital cinema to which I will later revisit.

This theme is revisited in its sequel. Released on the cusp of the millennium, *Toy Story 2* (1999) sees Woody become the object of fetishisation of a toy collector eager to complete his set of characters from the discontinued in-universe television series *Woody's Roundup*. While Woody at one point accepts his fate as a museum piece destined to be consigned to the past, his subsequent attempt to return home suggests that he is not quite prepared for this fate. Allegorically, just as Woody is convinced that there remains an active role for him to play in his world, so too is there a place for analogue filmmaking tools and techniques as a new era of digital filmmaking is about to begin.

As the following chapter explores in detail, George Lucas would emerge as a *de facto* leader of this new era. As well as having returned Hollywood to a more commercially-oriented filmmaking model, his pioneering work spearheading the development of new digital filmmaking technology would come to fruition during the 1990s (Pierson, 2002 p. 96). Resulting first in digitally-enhanced versions of the original *Star Wars* films, Lucas would develop the techniques and tools used to bring them to screens in 1997 before refining them for a trilogy of prequel films produced and released over the next eight years.

As well as providing would-be cinemagoers with another domestic distraction, arguably the largest concern shared by those involved in the industry relating to the internet

was piracy and the dissemination of copyrighted material online. As noted by Michael Franklin (2012) sharing content online constitutes a twofold problem: “[i]n its illegal form, Internet-enabled dissemination poses an existential threat to the film industry. In its legal form, it presents an exceptional challenge that pushes traditional industry set-ups into radical reorganisation” (2012 p. 101). As illustrated in the following section, and again in Chapter 4 by focusing on Lucasfilm as a case study, this remains an obstacle facing the industry today as studios continue their attempts to modernise and adapt both to a radically changing media landscape and changing patterns of media consumption.

In spite of the overwhelmingly negative analysis of digitisation it is useful to reconsider its benefits. Nicholas Rombes (2009) reminds us that in a time of palpable unease towards the emerging digital world, filmmaking was itself radically democratised and placed into the hands of those outside of the now firmly re-established Hollywood system – a theme forming the basis of Chapter 4’s focus on amateur production. For example, the Danish Dogme 95 movement led by Lars von Trier and Thomas Vinterberg has been described as a “return to basics” for filmmaking (Rombes, 2009 p. 14). In the same way the New Hollywood period sought to “cut film free of its evil twin, commerce” (Biskind, 1998 p. 17), the Dogme movement attempted to “remedy” the “rubbish” quality of films released in the preceding two decades (Stevenson, 2003 p. 70). In their efforts to combat the “fat, foolish, ruinously expensive and ideologically hateful” Hollywood movies which had become “the world’s dominant product” by this time, von Trier, Vinterberg, et al showed the world what could be done within the “constraints” of independent filmmaking (Kelly, 2000 p. 2).

A key theme of the thesis is how the proliferation of internet platforms and a robust digital infrastructure has allowed many to access and create much more material than they would have been able to in the past. Nonetheless, the emphatic rise of digital technology during the 1990s and 2000s has laid the groundwork for cinema’s current crisis. The next section will explore this in more detail and analyse why, notwithstanding the creative freedom and boundless possibilities it promises, the digital turn has generated such widespread fear from commercial, critical, and industrial sources.

2.3 – How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Digital Turn

> ***Digital technology is the same revolution as adding sound to pictures and the same revolution as adding color to pictures. Nothing more and nothing less***
>
> George Lucas (quoted in Kelly and Parisi, 1997)

The disruptive impact of the digital turn is a key concern for critics, filmmakers, and scholars alike – some of whom having argued that digital technology marks “an *epistemological rupture* that has implications for how we see the whole spectrum of media technologies” (Parikka, 2012 p. 22; original italics). It could thus be accepted that the digital “revolution”

has caused sudden, dramatic, and wide-reaching changes in the substance of cinema specifically and that of the media industry as a whole. As noted earlier, however, the medium has exhibited a remarkable elasticity in its ability to counteract changes within its equilibrium. Indeed, history shows that

> [t]he computer has replaced the manual typewriter but it did not do away with the keyboard. Television did not swallow radio, just as it did not replace the cinema. Yet each new technological medium changes the place of the others in society and profoundly affects not only their function, but the way we think about their history (Elsaesser and Hoffmann, 1998 p. 7).

Despite evidently reconfiguring the media landscape, Rodowick affirms that such historical instances "can be seen not as revolutions, but rather as additions or enhancements to the basic psychological and cultural experience of cinema" (2007 p. 182). It may therefore be more accurate to read Lucas's assertion above as downplaying the revolutionary capacity of the digital turn: rather than dramatically upheave or, indeed, rupture the status quo, digital technology will instead enhance both filmmaking and film-watching Digitisation, then, may be considered as the medium's latest cyclical revolution rather than a revolutionary cycle in and of itself; it hasn't been quite the rupture as some have suggested.

And yet, this too has been challenged. Belton disputes Lucas's claim, asserting that because "[n]o one technology takes quite the same path to full diffusion as another […] we cannot look to the path taken by one technology to explain or understand that of another" (2002 p. 100). This is evident from the technological enhancements cited earlier, with each following decidedly different "path[s] to full diffusion", while an even larger number strayed from theirs entirely, failing to meaningfully "diffuse" at all. Ultimately, Belton concludes that "contemporary comparisons of the advent of digital cinema to the coming of sound in the late 1920s are not only misleading but wrong" (ibid). In order to avoid a convoluted analysis of the digital turn as an instantaneous revolution, it would instead seem fairer to characterise the transition in a manner similar to those detailed earlier – a longer "*process* taking place over time" (Gaudreault and Marion, 2015 p. 37; original italics). One sector which is decidedly illustrative of this is film distribution because it "has an impact on every aspect of the film industry: it determines not just what film audiences see and how they see them, but also how films are developed, produced, and sold" (Franklin, 2012 p. 101). The ensuing effects of digitisation within distribution have led to a phenomenon known as "disintermediation", a term coined by Dina Iordanova (2012) referring to "a process whereby direct access to content makes the intermediary in a supply chain obsolete" (2012 p. 3). Furthermore, "[t]raditional distribution channels […] are being undermined" and this fundamentally "results in a diminished role for intermediaries" because "it creates a situation where distributors see themselves cut off from previously lucrative opportunities" (Iordanova, 2012 p. 4).

Disintermediation, then, effectively reduces the role of the industry go-between by destabilising their once-assured status as “gatekeepers” of content circulation. I would propose that this is an underlying contributor to the widespread distrust, and even hostility, towards digitisation; while it undoubtedly allows freer movement of, and access to, material it contemporaneously represents a direct challenge to the power of established distributors and their networks. For Iordanova, disintermediation also

> leads to the gradual narrowing of clearly distinguishable consecutive windows: content is often released across platforms simultaneously […] traditional windows get narrower and narrower, with the greatest pressure now being felt in the changing relationship between the theatrical and premium video-on-demand (VOD) windows, which are often closely positioned next to each other (ibid).

This narrowing of release windows has of course been partly driven by the threat of piracy, which has itself grown especially prevalent since the 1990s. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the pace at which this narrowing occurs “is dictated by the need to counteract the speed at which pirated material can now travel over the Internet” (Iordanova, 2012 p. 6).

An extreme example illustrating Iordanova’s model is Ben Wheatley’s *A Field in England* (2013). Shot over 12 days on-location (Burrell, 2013), Michael Gubbins and Peter Buckingham (2013) report that the film, made with a budget of just over £300,000, received a “day-and-date release” across several outlets alongside its cinema premiere, including its availability on home media and digital VOD services like iTunes, as well as its terrestrial broadcast on Film4 (2013 p. 3). In addition, the film was accompanied by an “online digital masterclass”, essentially a behind-the-scenes production website offering visitors the chance to see how it was made in great detail (Gubbins and Buckingham, 2013 p. 11), which is sadly no longer available. While it undeniably represents a unique experiment demonstrating the potentials new media hold for film production, distribution, and exhibition, the conclusions reached by Gubbins and Buckingham (2013 pp. 14 – 20) indicate that the feasibility of such a model remains prohibitive for the industry as a whole.

They seek to largely debunk the argument that this release method will negatively impact cinema attendance figures. While acknowledging that the Q&A event tied to its release “was a major draw for this film, which may have exaggerated the cinema interest”, their statistics support the possibility that “frequent cinemagoers will not be swayed by alternative options and that others may be convinced to go to theatres if there is a compelling experience on offer” (Gubbins and Buckingham, 2013 p. 14). It seems reasonable to assume, then, that the communal act of watching the film in the theatre trumped that of simply watching it as a television broadcast at home, with the Q&A session seen as an added bonus enhancing the experience. This was a clear aim of the project, with the authors noting that it “succeeded” without having necessarily been “diluted by the multiplatform release” (Gubbins and Buckingham, 2013 p. 15). This conclusion is corroborated by Heidi Grundström (2018) whose own study on the effects of digitisation for

cinemagoing likewise explores the allure of watching a film live in cinemas to surmise that "cinema-going is about much more than the simple act of watching a film" (2018 p. 6). Thus, even with the myriad viewing options available to consumers nowadays, and potential multiplatform release options that may exist, watching a film on the big screen remains alluring to those enamoured with the act of going to the cinema.

Although it was received relatively successfully, it does seem unlikely that this strategy will be applied wholesale in the film industry – at least, not in the foreseeable future. Indeed, historical precedence shows that the trend of alternative release patterns began as early as 2005 and remains predominantly bound to niche genres. Steven Soderbergh's independently-produced *Bubble* (2005) was simulcast in cinemas and on television before its arrival on DVD shortly thereafter (Gross, 2006). Michael Winterbottom's award-winning docudrama *The Road to Guantánamo* (2006) was broadcast in the UK on 9th March 2006 and released in cinemas and home media the following day (Rose, 2006). Gubbins and Buckingham conclude that, realistically, "[t]he release of *A Field in England* worked on its own terms but it cannot be said to have definitively proven the case for all independent films released day-and-date" (2013 p. 15).

The recent proliferation of new digital content providers like Amazon Prime Video, Apple TV+, Hulu, and Netflix threatens to continue to disrupt established distribution patterns. Netflix in particular has emerged as a valuable substitute for directors unable to receive backing from major Hollywood studios. Their back catalogue of acclaimed "Netflix Originals" (Netflix, 2019a) features films such as *Beasts of No Nation* (2015), *The Siege of Jadotville* (2016), *The Cloverfield Paradox* (2018), *Roma*, *Triple Frontier* (2019), and *The Irishman* (2019). This is supplemented with a variety of prestige tentpole television series such as *Orange Is the New Black* (2013 –), *Narcos* (2015 – 2017), *The Crown* (2016 –), and *13 Reasons Why* (2017 –).

Netflix's growing influence in global distribution and production has inevitably generated fervent debate within the media which feeds into an overarching narrative on digital technology (BBC Newsbeat, 2019). In response to Netflix and other upstart platforms, established broadcasters have created their own services in an attempt to retain viewers and remain relevant in an era with 24/7 access to content. In the UK, for example, recent decades have seen the emergence of several co-existing VOD initiatives like BBC's iPlayer, the ITV Hub, and Channel 4's All 4 system – all of which operate in-browser and as downloadable apps for use on properly-equipped televisions and, importantly, mobile devices. Mirroring co-productions within the film industry, the BBC and ITV jointly launched BritBox in an attempt to enter the growing streaming market and ensure their content remained accessible to users. Having previously been available in North America as early as 2018, BritBox went live in the UK in November 2019 as a paid-subscription platform offering subscribers access to an extensive back catalogue of BBC and ITV programming, as well as a selection of shows from Channel 4 and Channel 5 (ITV Press Centre, 2019). This

constitutes an unprecedented alliance between the leading UK broadcasters indicative of the challenges they face in the current media climate.

As reported by the UK's communications regulator Ofcom (2018a) there has been a "rapid take-up" in subscriptions to these new VOD services (2018a p. 4). According to their statistics, the amount of subscribers to platforms like those identified above overtook that of subscriptions to "'traditional' pay-TV services" in the first financial quarter of 2018 – with 11.1 million households holding accounts for more than one (ibid). Continued efforts explicitly targeting the mobile streaming market are also representative of widespread changes in how consumers are accessing their content. The sustained growth of mobile streaming and consuming material on-the-go has birthed the largely new phenomenon of "*nomadic consumption*" (Gaudreault and Marion, 2015 p. 129; original italics). This is clearly illustrated in another Ofcom survey (2018b) which reveals a striking increase in the number of UK citizens accessing the internet via mobile devices like smartphones and tablets. As of March 2018 three-quarters of the "UK digital population" reportedly consume via these nomadic technologies (Ofcom, 2018b p. 67). Furthermore, analysis carried out by Grand View Research, Inc. (2019) forecasts that "[t]he global video streaming market size is anticipated to reach USD 124.57 Billion by 2025" (Grand View Research, Inc., 2019). Together, these factors pose a veritable threat for established content providers and their intricate networks of distribution as content has broken free from longstanding exhibition schedules and locations.

Scholars have debated, too, how the digital proliferation of audiovisual content has inspired a gradual transformation in the role of consumers. It has been declared that while technological changes within film production have been "profound", so too are those "surrounding the concept of the viewer or spectator" (Rombes, 2008 p. 55). Accordingly, Michael Gubbins (2012) asserts that

> the wealth of choices, accessible on-demand on multiple platforms and devices, has created what can be characterised as an 'active audience' […] imply[ing] that the multimedia access to content on-demand has fundamentally changed the relationship between audience and content (2012 p. 68).

As Roderik Smits and E. W. Nikdel (2019) caution, however, this wealth of content choice is not as wide-ranging as one may initially believe. Smits and Nikdel cite the "algorithmic service" of platforms like those above which "performs a gatekeeping function by narrowing the breadth of content and mediating choice for the consumer" (2019 p. 28). That is to say, the catalogue of material found on Hulu, Netflix, Prime Video, and others is not unlimited and is constantly updated in accordance with access rights provided by copyright holders. Therefore, audiences must thus become more active in pursuing the content they wish to view so as to avail of the "wealth of choices" suggested by Gubbins above. This may involve, for example, subscribing to more than one streaming platform in order to diversify and widen

the scope of content available to them – something which would help to explain the Ofcom findings cited previously.

To an extent, this mirrors earlier patterns of audience fragmentation as film transcended the cinema screen to appear on televisions in the 1950s, and later as home media in the form of VHS and subsequently DVD (Klinger, 2006 pp. 59 – 61). Unlike these historical precedents, however, the modern viewer is now no longer limited to the confines of their home: he or she can now essentially consume what they want, when they want, and how and where they want to. This is evident in another emerging consumption pattern that, like nomadic consumption, appears to have been facilitated by content providers – that known as "time-shifting". Originally associated with the commodification of film via home media which "turn[s] films into objects that can be manipulated at will" (Tryon, 2009 p. 26), time-shifting is defined by Cameron Lindsey (2016) as "refer[ring] to any method of watching television whereby viewers watch programming at a time other than when it originally aired" (2016 p. 174). It is therefore no longer necessary for viewers to schedule timed recordings of their favourite programs – even though this is still common with digital recorders like TiVo and Sky+ – as they can now catch up on missed broadcasts.

Escalating competition by digital content providers offering subscribers a growing catalogue of audiovisual material is a prominent feature of modern-day conglomeration. This decade has already witnessed Comcast's procurement of NBCUniversal (Chozick and Stelter, 2013), parent company of Dreamworks Animation, and AT&T's takeover of Time Warner and its associated subsidiaries (AT&T, 2018). As reported by Liana Baker and Pamela Barbaglia (2018) it is inevitable that industry-wide consolidation will continue to occur. Indeed, the industry has undergone significant reconfiguration only in the past year. A $71.3 billion deal finalised in March 2019 saw Disney acquire 21st Century Fox (Szalai and Bond, 2019); CBS and Viacom have re-merged as one massive media conglomerate (Maglio, 2019); and toy company Hasbro has acquired production company Entertainment One at a cost of $3.8 billion in an attempt to diversify their corporate needs (Littleton, 2019).

This poses unquestionable problems for the media landscape: more accountability is placed on these film studio subsidiaries to remain financially feasible at a time when the emergence of new parties, like Amazon and Netflix, threatens their economic viability (Shi, 2018). Intriguingly, if not worryingly, this has forced Universal and Warner Brothers to announce a partnership for the future release of physical media in order to preserve this still valuable revenue stream (D'Alessandro, 2020a). Furthermore, there are also considerable challenges for independent filmmaking which already finds itself with the disadvantage of increased financial pressures (Youngs, 2020). George Lucas's hypothesis suggests that this will have a detrimental effect on the cinema-going experience:

> What you're going to end up with is fewer theaters […]. Bigger theaters, with a lot of nice things. Going to the movies is going to cost you 50 bucks, maybe 100. Maybe 150. […] And that's going to be what we call 'the movie business.'

> But everything else is going to look more like cable television on TiVo. […] It's not going to have cable or broadcast […]. It's going to be the internet television (quoted in Bishop, 2013).

The ability to access a seemingly endless stream of audiovisual material from the comfort of our own homes, foresees Lucas, means that the act of going to a cinema to watch a film on the big screen will become a more expensive, infrequent treat. The extent to which this is true remains to be seen, however his secondary prescient prediction is much more positive. Reflecting upon the ongoing disruption in the media landscape, he affirms that

> now is the best time we can possibly have […] It's a mess. It's total chaos […]. But out of that chaos will come some really amazing things. And right now there are amazing opportunities for young people coming into the industry to say, 'Hey, I think I'm going to do this and there's nobody to stop me. It's because all the gatekeepers have been killed! (ibid).

As the examples provided in the final section of this chapter demonstrate, these opportunities are varied and widespread.

In an attempt to justify their investments these corporations have, unsurprisingly, announced their own alternative streaming options. NBCUniversal have promised to enter the market in 2020 (Steinberg and Littleton, 2019) while details on WarnerMedia's service – which would add to AT&T's already considerable online empire (Salinas, 2018) – remain unclear (Faughnder and Lee, 2018). Disney, now majority shareholders of Hulu following the aforementioned Fox acquisition (Szalai and Bond, 2019), launched their own Disney+ service domestically in late 2019 before making it available globally in incremental stages (Lee, 2019) to hugely increase their presence in the progressively competitive online streaming market (Solsman and Sorrentino, 2020). These developments are illustrative of a changing media landscape rivalling the outlawed vertical integration practices which gave rise to the "Big Five" in the early twentieth century. Furthermore, the rapid expansion of competing streaming services mirrors the proliferation of cable TV described earlier following the birth of HBO – who, as a WarnerMedia subsidiary, launched two of their own in 2010 and later in 2015 (Szalai, 2010; Lieberman, 2014).

Another notable alteration in viewing patterns, particularly for television series, has been the dawn of binge-watching. For Casey J. McCormick (2016) the popularity of services like those cited above, and the freedom of viewers to watch how they want, means that binge-watching has "quickly become a dominant mode of TV consumption […] which many analysts define as watching three or more episodes in a row" (2016 p. 101). This has been enabled, even encouraged, by the likes of Netflix who often release a whole series of their original programming at once. McCormick shares the same view as Gubbins above, claiming that

> [t]he popularity of binging has engendered an entire discourse on the transformation of TV that recalls some of the most central debates in media studies: passive versus active consumption, narrative interactivity, and the shifting power dynamics among media producers and consumers (ibid).

These shifting power dynamics are examined more closely in Chapter 4 with regards to the production and reception of content – shifts which have also seen exponential growth within alternative distribution channels, like YouTube and Vimeo, and financing models endorsing online crowdfunding. What is important here, however, is the emphasis once more on the changing role of the viewer into a more active consumer and how this has been facilitated by technology.

The digital turn is directly responsible for the ever-growing assortment of competing delivery platforms and alternative consumption patterns, as well as the associated philosophical obstacles. Gaudreault and Marion contend that "[o]ne of the principal effects of the digital shift has been the big screen's loss of hegemony […] projection onto a movie screen has become just *one way* among others to consume images" (2015 p. 9; original italics). As noted previously, this follows on from earlier hegemonic struggles primarily instigated by television and changing lifestyles. Increasingly, however, both television and cinema find themselves battling new media outlets as well as each other.

Scrutinised above, the accounts of Grundström and Gubbins and Buckingham engage with the concern that while the big screen "may have a greater *aura* […] it is now just one means of consumption among others" (Gaudreault and Marion, 2015 p. 9; original italics). They synonymously counter Lucas's prophesy by indicating that the allure of watching a film in theatres remains strong, even though more accessible alternatives exist. For Grundström, "cinema-going still meets a very distinct set of needs that can't be reproduced by other modes of viewing", both thanks to "[c]inema's technical superiority" and the "'special feeling' of visiting the cinema" (2018 p. 19). Indeed, this echoes an earlier claim made by Michele Pierson (2002) who suggests that our attachment to cinema "has roots in a host of cultural practices and institutions [...] that continue to invest the cinema, and cinemagoing, with social and cultural value" (p. 123). UK cinema attendance figures for 2018, which show that levels were at their highest since 1970 (Clarke, 2019), endorse this. Despite also revealing a concurrent growth in engagement with alternative media entertainment, and juxtaposed with the Ofcom reports, it seems reasonable to conclude that cinema and cinemagoing remain in generally good health.

Yet, the perceived threat of digital technology remains. Gaudreault and Marion affirm that cinema's current "death" is

> indicative […] of the medium's decline within the great chorus of media and also of the end of a situation in which cinema exercised an across-the-board hegemony. This is what is in the process of dying, not the medium itself. What we are experiencing today is the end of cinema's supremacy in the vast kingdom of the moving image (2015 p. 13).

Rather than marking the death of a certain type of film, as was argued of sound and colour, or cinema itself, the medium's current period of reinvention instead signifies its "decline" within the rapidly-changing media landscape – one in which cinema is argued to have lost its status as "*the* mass entertainment medium par excellence" (Belton, 2009 p. 322; original italics).

Building upon the observations of Gubbins and McCormick – indicating the emergence of a more active consumer – I would suggest that nomadic consumption, time shifting, and binge viewing signify three clear viewing patterns which are emblematic of, and enabled by, the propagation of digital mobile viewing technologies allowing viewers to become more agencing of their desires. This is supported by Tryon's analysis of the ""computeriz[ation]"" of viewing which proposes that "the proliferation of portable media players and the emphasis on the computer as a site for film consumption have, together, significantly altered the contexts in which audiences encounter films" (2009 p. 6). The transcendence of film and televisual content beyond their traditional transmission outlets thus ensures that they no longer play the same role as before as the only place to "encounter" the text. Furthermore, Tryon asserts that these new media outlets inherently "address an interactive viewer" (2009 p. 7) for the way in which they seemingly promote new modes of watching.

The depictions of interactivity used by Gubbins, McCormick, and Tryon all focus primarily on the viewer's control of how they *consume* their chosen text. They all thus arguably conform to an earlier model of textual engagement described by Jens F. Jensen and Cathy Toscan (1999) which

> relies upon actual, physical interaction in the form of choices, decisions and communicative input to the system. Thus making it possible for the viewer to interact with the medium in such a way that he or she gains control over what to watch, when to watch, and how to watch, as well as having the opportunity to actively and directly participate in a program or its creation (1999 p. 15).

What the descriptions of Gubbins et al. neglect, however, is this latter concern with "the opportunity to actively and directly participate in a program or its creation". Chapter 4 deals with this more explicitly by investigating the new relationship between producer and consumer. Of note here is how attempts to placate this need to "actively and directly participate" in the narrative have resulted in some unconventional approaches to storytelling.

A recent notable example of this is Netflix's *Black Mirror: Bandersnatch* (2018), a film borrowing from the "choose your own adventure" literary genre which invites viewers to make narrative choices and alter the film's resolution. The positive reception of *Bandersnatch* has led the company to promise subscribers more of the same in the future (Ramachandran, 2019), a move which indicates the potential long-term viability of this mode of narrative storytelling. *You vs. Wild* (2019 –) is another Netflix-developed interactive

project featuring renowned survivalist Bear Grylls in which viewers “make key decisions to help Bear Grylls survive, thrive and complete missions in the harshest environments on Earth” (Netflix, 2019b).

The renewed interest in interactive programming follows earlier comparable instances aimed at engaging viewers. Michael O’Neill (2015) identifies second-screen viewing as one such practice “whereupon the longstanding primacy of the television screen is no more in terms of consuming televisual content, due to mobile technologies and social media both supplementing and supplanting the televisual experience” (2015 pp. 18 – 19). He describes how Channel 4 used series broadcast on its E4 channel including *Skins* (2007 – 2013) and *Misfits* (2009 – 2013) to combat time-shifting, and even piracy, by relying on social media to heighten the viewing experience during scheduled broadcasts. O’Neill asserts that this “strategy […] emphasised the importance and primacy of “liveness” and immediacy of viewing television-as-broadcast” as the broadcasters “furnish[ed] viewers with supplementary material and information” (2015 p. 29 – 30). Even though the interactive strategies between these series and *Bandersnatch* differ slightly, all illustrate innovative attempts to reinvigorate the viewing process. They exemplify, too, a democratisation of more power to audiences; the film allows viewers to directly influence the narrative – albeit by using a pre-determined set of alternative choices and outcomes – while the series mentioned here only permitted interactions between viewers and fictionalised social media accounts of the characters.

As well as those signals identified earlier, a reduction in the use of celluloid film is a tangible manifestation of the consequences of the digital turn. This has intensified financial pressures for companies like one-time market-leader Kodak who, having “sold 90 percent of the photographic film in the US and 85 percent of the cameras” in 1976, filed for bankruptcy in 2012 (Usborne, 2012). Despite assurances that several high-profile Hollywood directors will continue to shoot on physical film (Macnab, 2017), and renewed support from major studios (Giardina, 2020), it is undeniable that shooting on digital has become the standard for modern-day filmmaking.

The disappearance of physical film in this manner raises its own set of philosophical concerns, much like those reflected in the series of films discussed in the previous section. For Stephen Prince (1994) “digital imaging in its dual modes of image processing and CGI challenges indexicality based notions of photographic realism” (1994 p. 29). Likewise Lev Manovich (1995) asserts that “[d]igital media redefines the very identity of cinema” because “what used to be cinema’s defining characteristics have become just the default options, with many others available” (1995 p. 1). Manovich goes further, insisting that “[a]s cinema enters the digital age […] cinema can no longer be clearly distinguished from animation. It is no longer an indexical media technology but, rather, a sub-genre of painting” (1995 p. 2) – a sensibility shared by Lucas himself which is scrutinised in more detail in the following chapter. His interpretation has been espoused more recently by Belton who affirms that

> [i]f the cinema is defined in terms of its indexicality, then digital cinema is not really cinema […], indexicality would seem to provide just one more continuity that connects analog and digital cinema. The advent of digital cinema, in other words, does not mark the death of traditional cinema but its resurrection in digital form. But given the cinema's flexibility as a medium, does it not then run the risk of continually redefining itself out of existence? Should there be a point where one must acknowledge that this or that particular version of cinema is no longer cinema? (2014 pp. 465 – 466).

At the same time, Niels Niessen (2012) concedes that while "the digital image supposedly lacks" an "indexical relation to reality", it is but a constituent part of what defines cinema (2012 p. 161). Thus, the "narrative conflict" between film and digital which came to prominence during the 1990s "reasserts the aesthetic value of analog images as somehow more real than simulations" (Rodowick, 2007 p. 5). This opposition persists in the developing conflict between the two, with Rodowick later arguing that "[b]ecause the digital arts are without substance and therefore not easily identified as objects, no medium-specific ontology can fix them in place […]. Digital media are neither visual, nor textual, nor musical – they are simulations" (2007 p. 10). The ontological (in)stability of digital cinema provokes Rodowick to question the identity of the medium in its transitional state:

> Is "film" in its most literal sense synonymous with "cinema"? To say that film is disappearing means only that photochemical celluloid is starting to disappear [...]. As celluloid […] disappears into a virtual and electronic realm, is cinema itself disappearing? (2007 pp. 10 – 11).

Rather than experiencing its complete disappearance, we are instead "witnessing a marked *decentering of the theatrical film experience* [… which] follows from the *displacement of a "medium"* wherein every phase of the film process is being replaced with digital technologies" (2007 pp. 27 – 28; original italics). This is later supported by Gaudreault and Marion who argue that cinema's "*encounter with the digital brought about a real weakening of its being-in-the-world*" (2015 pp. 146 – 147; original italics). Computerised viewing, the decentring of the film theatre, and hegemonic instability have combined to directly accelerate cinema's loss of medium specificity. Yet, as the evidence presented earlier suggests, cinema remains buoyant. Indeed, as the following examples show, the medium now lives in myriad forms and has the benefits greatly from this process of freeing-up.

2.4 – “Now I’m Free, There Are No Strings On Me”: Cinema Unbound

> ***[I]f we want to make sense out of the diverse ways in which films are viewed today, we should look beyond the limitations of place and space, and concentrate on finding new ways of how to understand the non-linear and fluctuating ways audiences move between viewing options***
>
> (Grundström, 2018 p. 7)

Digitisation within the media industry has generated discernible concern for those directly and indirectly involved. Nevertheless, it does offer a variety of benefits for those willing to openly engage with emerging practices. The digital turn has, essentially, “freed-up” cinema in a range of ways. Paradoxically, the steady rise of new digital media since the dawn of the new millennium has prompted some to claim that

> [w]e have today come full circle from Edison’s Kinetoscope. Contemporary motion pictures are now regularly consumed privately or semi-privately on small video screens ranging from domestic television sets to hand-held mobile devices (Belton, 2014 p. 470).

This has been elsewhere referred to as the “disembodiment of cinema” (Rombes, 2009 p. 21) and, more recently, the “relocation of cinema” (Casetti, 2016). In the guise of drive-in theatres cinema has previously relocated as early as 1933 (Bellis, 2019), although the act of communal viewing remained relatively unchanged. While the current disembodiment of cinema allegedly represents “the end of a model which has been dominant for a long time” (Casetti, 2011 p. 7), drive-in exhibition acts as a notable precedent for a number of uniquely contemporary initiatives aimed at restoring the allure of collectively watching a film on the big screen – all of which depend upon the very technology which has frequently been vilified.

Cannes in a Van was founded in 2007, hypothesised in a “drunken conversation between two friends” which sparked an annual tradition of transporting independent films to be screened at the Cannes International Film Festival (Cannes in a Van, 2019a). The endeavour received growing recognition within the industry and commercial press, even launching the Van d’Or Independent Film Awards in 2011. It was fleeting, however, ultimately ending in 2014 due to a withdrawal of financial backing from sponsors (ibid), perhaps indicative of a reluctance to gamble on the longevity of such endeavours. The initiative relied extensively upon digital infrastructure as organisers requested submissions be made via DVD or digital copy (Cannes in a Van, 2019b). Naturally, this helps to lower distribution costs for filmmakers and makes it easier for the films to be transported and exhibited at the final location. This is not only an effective example of disintermediation in action but it also takes Casetti’s theme of the relocation of cinema to the extreme. Furthermore this momentary venture also acted as a valuable incentive for those who whose films would otherwise be forgotten online.

Launched in 2011 Scalarama is an ongoing annual “celebration of cinema” which invites participants to come together in their shared passion for film (Scalarama, 2019). Based in the UK the festival sees a wide range of events, primarily film screenings, occur throughout the month of September in a number of locales and alternative pop-up screening venues across the country (ibid). Likewise Popup Cinema, beginning in 2012, is another UK-based “programming service” whose founders “believe that community-led cinema is the future” (Popup Cinema, 2019). Both of these examples place an explicit communal ethos at their core which reflects an overarching desire to bring people together and celebrate the experience of shared viewing. At the same time as relocating film into unconventional locales they also share characteristics frequently associated with microcinema. As outlined by Donna de Ville (2015) this movement began in the 1990s in North America and sought to “provide noncommercial, nontheatrical options for exhibition by independent programmers […] as alternatives to the well-established […] commercial movie industry and sometimes, oppositionally, as a rejection of it” (2015 p. 105). Consequently microcinema has an inherent drive to “introduce sociability into increasingly pervasive individualized moving-image reception” (ibid).

It is clear that even though the practice of moving exhibition outside of the conventional theatre may have a long history, recent schemes such as Scalarama and Popup Cinema have only been made possible thanks to continued refinements within film technology. As these examples show, this is not necessarily a negative consequence of the digital turn. Indeed, as argued earlier, the boundless movement of the film-text afforded by digital technology ensures that such innovative exhibition methods can occur and bring cinema to a wider audience; digital technology has thus “made it possible for more films to be watched in more places than ever before” (Aveyard, 2016 p. 140). Although we may have “inevitably slid away from the film theatre and into other spaces” (Casetti, 2011 p. 7), this began long before the digital turn. Furthermore, this suggests that cinema is more alive now than it ever has been. While services like Netflix also widen the scope of consumable content, the ability to watch an equally diverse range of films in a setting comparable to the communal theatre experience remains equally valuable and popular.

Just as watching a film is no longer restricted to the confines of a film theatre, filmmaking has likewise experienced a certain unbinding from traditional models. Like those involved with the Dogme 95 movement, Marc Evans, director of *My Little Eye* (2002), acknowledges the inherent experimentation which seems to be promoted by the new technology, affirming that shooting “is no longer sacrosanct and precious […]. You can try things without much setting up or worrying too much about the budget” (quoted in Hanson, 2003 p. 16). *28 Days Later* (2002) famously used digital video technology in order to represent a post-apocalyptic London onscreen. The flexibility and mobility it provided allowed the filmmakers to essentially shut-down the city and acquire the necessary desolate imagery of the capital. The film’s cinematographer, Anthony Dod Mantle, confesses that they “would

not have been allowed to shoot" in the way they did on traditional 35mm film (quoted in Bankston, 2003).

Similarly, documentary filmmaking has also considerably benefited. Films including *Meeting People is Easy* (1998), *No Maps for These Territories* (2000), and *Bodysong* (2003) profit directly from the possibilities it affords. Indeed, Hanson declares that *No Maps for These Territories* "could not and would not have been made without the advent of digital technology" due to its innovative use of editing (2003 p. 29). *Bodysong* was also only made possible thanks to the "richness of the material and the intimacies recorded through the enveloping presence of digital recording technologies" (2003 p. 30). Grant Gee, director of *Meeting People Is Easy*, is openly enthusiastic for the way in which digital video means "you're generally not so much of a pain in the ass […] you're less visible", thus ensuring that the footage has an added sense of realism (quoted in Hanson, 2003 p. 34). Additionally, this decreased visibility combines with an increased mobility ensuring that you can also "shoot in situations without having to deal with location permits" (ibid), as well as associated difficulties transporting cumbersome technology. This has arguably been a driving force behind the modern upsurge in popular fly-on-the-wall docuseries including *24 Hours in A&E* (2011 –), *24 Hours in Police Custody* (2014 –), and *Gogglebox* (2013 –).

Digital video technology has invigorated independent filmmaking too. Atkinson identifies *Rage* (2009) as the "first ever feature film to be designed for mobile viewing" (2014 p. 64). The film was "released simultaneously as a theatrical release and also as a downloadable film via *Babelgum* (for free) to be watched on a mobile phone" (ibid). Predating *A Field in England*, Sally Potter's film innovatively used digital technology to promote new production/exhibition strategies which redefine established production-reception models. Like Wheatley's film, *Rage* premiered alongside a live Q&A "which linked a number of the actors via synchronous video conferencing to the physical location of the British Film Institute" where the premiere was being held (ibid). Once more, the use of videoconferencing technology in this instance to enhance the experience demonstrates another unique facet of what is possible in cinema. A comparable feat was achieved with Woody Harrelson's groundbreaking *Lost in London* (2017) which was filmed in a single shot and broadcast in real-time directly to cinemas (Pulver, 2016).

More recently *The Silver Goat* (2012) was released as the "first feature film to be created exclusively for the iPad, the first to be released as an app in the UK and several other countries, and the first in the world to have an iPad-only premiere melding the viewing experience with the delivery mechanism" (Atkinson, 2014 p. 66). Eschewing a traditional theatre-bound premier, the film debuted "on a London Route Master Bus which traversed many of the film's locations throughout the city whilst the audience members watched the film on their individual iPads" (ibid). Like *Rage*, this example once more signifies the disembodied relocation of the film from its conventional locale and represents an innovative attempt at immersive viewing. Furthermore, films like *Tangerine* (2015) and *Unsane* (2018)

made equally effective use of streamlined video technology, having been filmed entirely using smartphones (Sharf, 2017). An even more extreme example can be found in horror film *Unknown Visitor* (2019) which was captured entirely using a doorbell camera.

Hallmarks of a rapidly evolving industry, these unconventional approaches to production and distribution reflect themes prophetically raised by Lucas in a 1997 interview. Discussing the "two guys in a garage" ethos, described as "the basic building block of Silicon Valley" (Kelly and Parisi, 1997), Lucas claims that with hardware and software becoming increasingly affordable "[t]here's nothing to stop you from doing something provocative and significant" (ibid). The only obstacle in the way, for Lucas, "is the marketplace […]. Once distribution frees itself up and more people have access to the distribution channels, you're going to find more people" bypassing established models to independently make and release their own films (ibid). While these ideas are revisited in greater detail in Chapter 4, it is important to note that the examples cited above clearly benefit from reimagined practices.

Examples of film distribution being unbound from its traditional models and outlets were provided in the earlier discussion of disintermediation and the coinciding rise of new VOD platforms. Largely supporting emerging independent markets has been a simultaneous democratisation of funding. Recent decades have witnessed an exponential rise in the number of projects created via crowdfunding, a form of crowdsourcing which seeks to raise capital by upending the traditional producer-consumer dichotomy.

Ethan Mollick and Alicia Robb (2016) contend that "crowdfunding offers something other funding mechanisms do no – a way to democratize access to the capital needed to commercialize and distribute innovation" (2016 p. 73). Focusing primarily on Kickstarter, the pair recognise the key role such initiatives play in encouraging independent artistic endeavours which allegedly "dominate crowdfunding, making up, conservatively, 80% of the projects on Kickstarter" (2016 p. 76). While this may be seen as a positive Mollick and Robb identify an underlying problem for funding practices on a larger scale:

> since 2012 more money has gone to the arts through Kickstarter than the National Endowment of the Arts, meaning the crowd now has more influence on funding new artwork than expert grant judges. This represents a profound change in how the arts are funded, but also raises important questions about how these changes in funding approaches may ultimately alter what sorts of art is created (ibid).

Pragmatically, the redistribution of power in such a way seemingly reduces the role of professional and governmental bodies formed specifically for such purposes. While arts funding is traditionally precarious, with much-needed grants often the first casualties of financial cutbacks, government endorsement nevertheless signifies a certain level of security as opposed to crowdfunding. At the same time, as the pair identify above, non-governmental financiers with less stringent regulations about investment can enable a wide range of unique and even subversive artistic projects to be realised. This is recognised as a large

concern by Valentina Assenova et al. (2016) who, while overwhelmingly acknowledging the potential of crowdfunding, see legislation as a necessary evil in order for the practice to remain a credible alternative to traditional funding pathways.

A novel contemporary example benefitting from the rise of crowdfunding, and new legislation aimed at stimulating the growth of small businesses (Spangler, 2016), Legion M was founded in 2016 with the aim of allowing fans to have direct input into the projects the studio becomes involved in (ibid). Championing creativity in myriad forms the studio has a diverse portfolio (Legion M, 2019). Notably, its film ventures include Kevin Smith's *Jay and Silent Bob Reboot* (2019), psychedelic Nicolas Cage-starring revenge-thriller *Mandy* (2018), *Colossal* (2017) with Anne Hathaway and Jason Sudeikis, and horror-thriller *Bad Samaritan* (2018) featuring David Tennant. The examples discussed above are clear evidence of the benefits associated with digital cinema. At the same time as offering new creative opportunities, both for those looking to enter the industry and those already working as professional filmmakers, they have not caused the long-suffering film industry to vanish. Instead, legitimising Lucas's earlier prescience, I would argue that this emerging market acts as a complementary alternative to established production practices.

Filmmaking and film watching have been emancipated from their conventional trappings, resulting in an apparent loss of medium specificity. Explained via the concept of computerised viewing this has coincided with, or perhaps inspired, a rekindled interest in interactive projects. While *Bandersnatch* and *You vs. Wild* are uniquely modern case studies one must again not neglect historical precedence. Directed by Radúz Činčera and released over 50 years previously, *Kinoautomat* (1967) is widely cited as the world's "first ever interactive film" (Willoughby, 2007). Alexis Kirke et al (2018) describe how the film is a groundbreaking, if rudimentary, attempt at actively engaging viewers and allowing them to influence the narrative flow. Exhibitions of the film

> involved a moderator who would appear in front of the screen nine times during the film showing. The moderator asks the audience which of two choices they want to be followed for the next scene and there is a vote. Then the next scene is shown (2018 p. 166).

Despite being well-received, political factors prevented the licensing of the Kinoautomat system by Hollywood, ensuring that the format never really developed (Willoughby, 2007). Indeed, it would take another 25 years before technology was sophisticated enough to permit the next notable attempt at interactive filmmaking.

As reported by William Grimes (1993), *I'm Your Man* (1992) relied on interactive technology similar to that used in videogame consoles. A "black pistol grip affixed to the right armrest of each seat" allowed the viewer to choose between three coloured buttons corresponding to onscreen prompts (Grimes, 1993). These responses would be tallied and the most-chosen option would subsequently unfold onscreen. Where *Kinoautomat* offered a

binary choice system, necessitating the involvement of an on-location mediator, *I'm Your Man* benefited from, indeed required, the storage capabilities of the laser disk format which enabled an almost seamless cyclical transition between scenes, prompts, and choices:

> because each decision leads to a new plot turn with its own set of problems and decisions, the film makers […] had to generate about 90 minutes worth of film, the current limit on laser disk storage capacity, with about 68 different scene variations (Grimes, 1993).

Even though the innovation behind *I'm Your Man* resulted in a far more sophisticated end product it was largely less well-received, ultimately meaning that once again "the approach did not take off" (Kirke et al, 2018 p. 166). More recently, artistic troupe Blast Theory attempted to combine novel techniques for a screening of their film *Bloodyminded* (2018). Shot in real-time in a single take, the film was livestreamed across the globe via the internet. Although viewers could not directly influence the plot, their interaction was encouraged at various points throughout the film via questions posed to them with onscreen prompts. While *Bandersnatch* and *You vs. Wild* supported direct viewer input, those behind *Bloodyminded* saw their project as an opportunity for viewers "to consider their own relationship with violence – as individuals and as members of a society that continues to wage war on our behalf" (Blast Theory, n.d.).

Hanson speculates about the future of interactive and immersive storytelling to propose that the continued sophistication of the technology used to realise it will result in "many more viewers becom[ing] "interactors," comfortable with exploring and influencing the plot and proceedings themselves" (2003 p. 67). Hanson also anticipates that "[a]s it matures, computer gaming is taking over from cinema as the modern frontier of drama and dramatic action", and there will soon be a time when "[w]e shall all become both players and spectators" (ibid). Even though the revenues of the U.S. film and videogame industries achieved financial parity in 2018 (Minotti, 2019), it is difficult to imagine the extent to which Hanson's prediction will come true. Indeed, buoyant sales of Sony's PlayStation VR system (Shuman, 2019) remain overshadowed by these earlier unsuccessful attempts to merge-media and promote this genre of storytelling as a viable mainstream product.

Others have made comparable forecasts on the future of interactive cinema. Richard Grusin (2016) has written of a "Cinema of Interactions" (2016 p. 65) which will "continue increasingly to be engaged with the social, technological, and aesthetic forms and practices of digital media" (2016 p. 66). Like Hanson, Grusin proposes that this "new" cinema will be characterised by an increase in interaction – not only between consumer and text, but between media texts themselves:

> I want to suggest that at the onset of the twenty-first century, as motion pictures are increasingly moving away from a photographic ontology of the real towards a post-photographic digital ontology, cinema is defined not as the photographic mediation of an unmediated world […] but rather as the remediation of an

> already mediated world distributed among a network of other digital remediations (2016 p. 67).

That is to say, cinema's elasticity will once again be challenged as the medium attempts to redefine itself.

Of particular interest to Grusin is the remediation that occurs between cinema and videogames. He identifies how the "semiotics of video game screen space have become increasingly conventionalized in their incorporation of "cut scenes" or "cinematics," letter-boxed narrative segments introducing a game's various levels of play" (2016 p. 76). Traditionally, these "narrative segments" feature extended periods of exposition progressing the story and borrow heavily from Hollywood production aesthetics, with character close-ups, establishing shots, and voiceover dialogue acting as prominent staples. This is particularly emblematic of the *Metal Gear* videogame series created by Hideo Kojima who openly celebrates his infatuation with cinema, its influence on his work, and the parallels between the two media (Parkin, 2015). Kojima is renowned for "co-opting Hollywood conventions to provide a gaming experience that resonates with the same emotional power as film" (Hanson, 2003 p. 59). In order to provide this resonance Kojima recognises the importance of the cinematic element, asserting that "[t]o make the game more enjoyable and captivating, and to make the player feel like he's present in that setting, we need the cinematic element" (quoted ibid).

The drive for heightened immersion and cinematic storytelling in videogames provides developers with a unique set of challenges as they must balance rewarding gameplay with a compelling narrative – in the same way that pioneers of interactive cinema must likewise balance viewer satisfaction with narrative resolution. This has seen the rise of story-driven gameplay relying on the use of quick time events (QTE), onscreen prompts which require immediate player interaction in order to provide the desired outcome. David Cage is another prominent videogame artist whose games use this feature to straddle the boundaries between cinema and gaming. Cage served as writer-director for *Heavy Rain* (2010), *Beyond: Two Souls* (2013), and *Detroit: Become Human* (2018), all of which remediate Hollywood aesthetics associated with the crime thriller, fantasy, and science-fiction genres to feature cinematic storytelling infused with QTE requiring attentive interaction from the player throughout. Likewise, *Until Dawn* (2014) is inspired by the teen horror genre which similarly uses QTE and places players in control of a group of friends as they attempt to survive the night at a remote cabin. The recent release of virtual reality (VR) gaming technology into the domestic market signifies a clear intention of the games industry to continue their efforts at building upon this type of gameplay and bridging the two media.

It is useful to note that Lucas has historically been unenthusiastic about any potential crossover between cinema and videogames, and is keen to emphasise that "by definition

they're different – storytelling and games are two different mediums" (quoted in Kelly and Parisi, 1997). Elaborating, he goes on to argue that

> [t]he fact that games are going to look more like movies, and you'll be able to interact with cybercharacters that look very real, and you'll be able to have conversations with them, that doesn't suddenly make it a movie or storytelling. You're using the same techniques that you're using to make movies in a game environment, but it's still a game. I don't care how you do it, once you have a story to tell, it's different […]. Psychologically, it's a different kind of experience (ibid).

Grusin later reminds us that this aesthetic remediation occurs in cinema too (2016 pp. 77 – 83). In addition to a long list of videogame adaptations – including *Tron* (1982), *Super Mario Bros.* (1993), *Resident Evil* (2002), and *Assassin's Creed* (2016) – there are several modern films which renew the anxieties of *The Matrix* and *Toy Story*. *Gamer* (2009), *Jumanji: Welcome to the Jungle* (2017), and *Ready Player One* (2018) benefit from advanced technology to present us with new virtual worlds, often as means to escape from our own reality. As a result they legitimise Valerie Morignat's (2018) assertion that "[d]igital arts amplify" Thomas Pavel's (1988) claim that there has been a "gradual reduction of <<the distance that separates the spectator from the fictional world>>" (quoted in Morignat, 2018 p. 1). Yet others adopt visual conventions associated with videogames to uniquely depict the narrative and make the spectator feel more involved. *Hardcore Henry* (2015), for example, mirrors first-person shooter (FPS) videogames and is shot entirely in first-person which places viewers in the shoes of the protagonist. While this had been attempted before, as early as Robert Montgomery's *Lady in the Lake* (1947), and much later in *Maniac* (2012), technology has clearly evolved to such a point as to make this aesthetic possible.

The remediation of videogame style in such a way is indicative of blurring media boundaries frequently attributed to the rise of digital media. For Terje Rasmussen (1999) digitisation has resulted in a "social and technical change, which involves technical sophistication, leading to a broader range of, and combinations of, media types" (1999 p. 153). It has, in essence, birthed "a continuous process of differentiation and integration of media modes or types […], with a number of unintended consequences in its wake" (ibid). This can be witnessed as far back as the experimental "art and technology movement […] which flourished in the mid- to late 1960s" and saw collaborations between technologists and radical artists who "sought to participate more actively in increasingly technological times" (Utterson, 2011 pp. 74 – 75). These artists included Stan VanDerBeek and John Whitney who, among others, saw an opportunity to benefit from rapidly sophisticated computer technology to create art which challenged the establishment and traditional media boundaries.

As well as resulting in the computerisation of viewing it has, naturally, introduced a level of computerisation to film production. Examples provided by Morignat demonstrate, for

instance, how computer-based technology has found its way into films in the form of artificial intelligence (AI). The work of Steven Regelous on Peter Jackson's *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy (2001 – 2003) resulted in Massive, a "multi-agent simulation software" which enabled the large-scale battles between computer-generated (CG) characters seen throughout the films (Morignat, 2018 pp. 12 – 13). This software controls the behaviour of the digital avatars and determines their interactions onscreen. Similar techniques have been applied more recently in *Bohemian Rhapsody* (2018); the film's climactic sequence represents Queen's 1985 Live Aid performance at Wembley Stadium in London (John Ottman quoted in Giardina, 2018).

As explored in the next chapter, equally innovative CG technology was used by George Lucas's effects company Industrial Light and Magic (ILM) on his prequel *Star Wars* films (1999 – 2005) to combine live-action and digital characters within fully-digital environments – as well as the manipulation of scanned likenesses to perform physically impossible stunts. Usefully, ILM continue to push the boundaries of digital effects, having recently constructed a unique "virtual production solution" which promises to radically change how films are made (ILM, 2020). Dubbed StageCraft, it relies on the Unreal Engine software created by videogame developer and publisher Epic Games, Inc. to generate immersive, wholly-digital, photorealistic environments which react to actor movements in real time (Roettgers, 2019). Lucas's trendsetting continues to manifest itself beyond this, particularly evident in the recent phenomenon of digital de-aging, a process which sees an actor's contemporary likeness replaced with a more youthful visage (Giardina, 2017). More worryingly, it has also paved the way for the resurrection of deceased actors, for example Peter Cushing in *Rogue One: A Star Wars Story* (2016) (Tapley and Debruge, 2016).

While this may afford directors and producers much more creative opportunity, the extent to which this will replace shooting with real actors on-location remains to be seen. Indeed, it has been noted that "special effects have made the body a site of ontological contest, and a testbed for imaging technologies" for as long as such techniques and tools have been in use (North, Rehak, and Duffy, 2015 p. 99). Nevertheless, it seems apparent that the anxieties identified by Arthur, Rodowick, Tryon, and Willis persist as the real-world begins to be supplanted by its digital imitation. Moreover, moral qualms aside, as de-aging and the "teleological myth of human replacement" remains, this uneasiness may only continue to grow (North, Rehak and Duffy, 2015 p. 100).

2.5 – Conclusion

> ***The point to be made is that in the transition from celluloid to digital cinema, relations are destabilized, replayed, or renewed as functions of, and matters that arise from, a technological change. But this does not mean that the existential powers of cinema are lost***
>
> (Hadjioannou, 2012 p. 35)

Despite having been eternally beset by repeated proclamations of its death, cinema has successfully survived the challenges posed by sound, colour, television, home video, and now the oft-bemoaned digital turn – even benefitting from these in myriad ways. The elasticity of cinema is unquestionable; in the face of considerable philosophical and practical difficulties, the institution persists, as it has done and will continue to do as we move further into the digital age.

This is not to say, however, that cinema remains unchanged. Its successful perseverance has extracted what may be described as a heavy toll for its soul. Each new enhancement or addition poses its own unique features and, as a result, its own correspondent challenges – often demanding us to revisit and re-appraise what we know about the medium and our relationship to it. As noted earlier, sound and colour were attributed with the move-away, even death, of a certain style of filmmaking. This was repeated following the arrival of television, resulting in the shift to spectacle and widescreen formats which would inform the later turn to blockbuster filmmaking.

The digital turn poses its own unique set of obstacles. While the theoretical implications predominantly remain the subject of critical discourse, the practical effects have had very tangible consequences. Against the backdrop of ongoing conglomeration the media industry has continued to evolve in order to meet the needs of new multinational corporations. The rise of new media and platforms like Netflix have redrawn long-established boundaries and destabilised once-steadfast production networks. This has clearly changed the relationship between producers and consumers, and between consumers and that which they consume – an inevitable consequence of being able to access what one wants, whenever one wants, and how one wants.

Subsequent chapters will explore how various economic, industrial, social, and technological factors have reshaped the industry, and how critical discourse has responded. Next, the thesis analyses some of the implications of the digital turn, using George Lucas to frame the discussion by exploring his role, his contribution, and the evolution of his ideas throughout his career.

Chapter 3 – Digital Cinema and George Lucas

As director, producer, writer, editor, technology innovator, and entrepreneur, the controversial George Lucas may well be the most identifiable and popular film maker in the history of the medium [...]. Along with his close friend and colleague Steven Spielberg, he established the modern blockbuster phenomenon. For good or ill, Lucas has revolutionised an industry

(Kline, 1999 p. vii)

3.1 – Introduction

> ***The '70s was the first time that a kind of age restriction was lifted, and young people were allowed to come rushing in with all of their naïveté and their wisdom and all of the privileges of youth. It was just an avalanche of new ideas, which is why the '70s was such a watershed***
>
> Steven Spielberg (quoted in Biskind, 1998 pp. 14 – 15)

Emerging in the late 1960s as one of the so-called New Hollywood "movie brats" (Biskind, 1998 p. 15), George Lucas's work in the film industry uniquely sets him apart him as a key figure in the history of cinema. Exhibiting a keen desire for artistic autonomy and creative control – like others appearing during this period, including Robert Altman, Hal Ashby, Francis Ford Coppola, Martin Scorsese, and Steven Spielberg – Lucas has tenaciously defended the rights of film directors throughout his career. Encapsulating the New Wave ethos, he once proclaimed that "[t]he studio system is dead […]. The power is with the people now. The workers have the means of production!" (quoted in Biskind, 1998 p. 75). As the chapter goes on to explore, Lucas's often contentious attempts to assert control over the films bearing his name sit at odds with his countercultural bravado. Unsurprisingly, this passion for autonomy informs much of the current reappraisal of his influence on the industry. Perhaps most significant is his testimony at a 1988 Senate judiciary hearing, convened to explore potential improvements to copyright law in the United States, where Lucas passionately argued for the preservation of cultural heritage and the moral rights of the artist (in United States G.P.O., 1988).

This chapter scrutinises both Lucas's spoken and written testimonies in order to directly engage with his own thoughts and convictions regarding respect for artistic vision. This is contextualised against the historical backdrop of the film industry in the 1980s which featured the infamous colourisation controversy that fed into the longstanding debate around the moral rights of artists (Edgerton, 2000; Zimmermann, 2008 pp. 10 – 11). Relatedly, this period also witnessed the intensification of the authorship debate following the publication of Andrew Sarris's (1962) polemical *Notes on the Auteur Theory*. As such, I will explore how concerns of directorial authorship were reinvigorated during the New Hollywood era, a time which, as noted in Chapter 2, saw established hierarchies destabilised and power redistributed behind the camera. This placed more creative control into the hands of what Biskind describes as "hyphenates" (1988 p. 17) – those filmmakers who combined the roles of director, producer, and writer. By reflecting on how this affected Lucas's evolving professional mindset and thoughts on authorship, I will then investigate the filmmaker's subsequent behaviour in the persistent pursuit of creative autonomy, authorship, and control.

As well as being a vocal proponent of artistic rights George Lucas has also played an integral part in the research and development of digital filmmaking technology that has helped to transform the medium. The transition towards a digital cinema has, as noted

previously, caused much fervent debate about the future of the medium. To this end, the chapter then turns to investigate the motivations behind Lucas's desire to reinvent the filmmaking process by affording directors more control over their work. This is another useful opportunity to continue to engage with his individual views and juxtapose them against the overarching trichotomy between film, commerce, and art.

3.2 – George Lucas, The Berne Convention, and the Rights of the Artist

> ***The thing that is problematic in film is who is the artist? Who is the author? Writers claim authorship; the director claims authorship; the producer claims authorship. Ultimately, somebody should be designated the author […]. I'm not completely sure whether it's the producer, the director, the writer, or all three***
>
> George Lucas (quoted in Kelly and Parisi, 1997)

Ultimately ratified in 1988 before officially coming into effect in the United States the following year, the Berne Convention granted greater copyright protection for the works of artists, thus ensuring their creative vision was respected and their works were safeguarded against external interference (Ross, 1990 p 363). As part of what Brian Jay Jones (2016) describes as the US government's "constitutionally mandated "advise and consent"" obligations, Senate judiciary hearings were held in February and March 1988 with the aim of re-evaluating domestic copyright law and the development of new legislation to protect intellectual property (2016 p. 365). A perennial anxiety especially for those involved in the film industry, this was a timely intervention given the recent phenomenon of film colourisation which began when Hal Roach Film Classics Inc. colourised *Topper* (1937) for release on home video in May 1985 (Weinger, 1985 p. 25; see also Edgerton, 2000). As Jones later describes, many of the black-and-white films shown on Ted Turner's cable networks in the 1980s had also been colourised for broadcast (2016 p. 365) – with Turner alleging he intended to do the same to other classics such as *Citizen Kane* (1941) (quoted in Associated Press, 1989). These actions, and the promise of more to come, exposed an obvious weakness in copyright law at the time which impending legislation intended to rectify. For Irvin Molotsky (1988), however, these new regulations failed to include the sought-after moral rights clause for writers and directors "that would protect their work against changes they do not authorize" (1988). Instead, the government provided assurances that existing domestic laws sufficiently protected their interests against "unfair competition, defamation, and privacy rights" (ibid). Given that Norman McLeod and Orson Welles – directors of *Topper* and *Citizen Kane* respectively – were dead, there was naturally no way for them to authorise, or even oversee, changes to their films: legally, Turner could effectively do as he pleased.

Having suffered comparable interference while making *THX 1138* (1971) and *American Graffiti* (1973), George Lucas found the thought of this unpalatable and used his

1988 Senate judiciary appearance to argue against such behaviour. Candidly responding to the ongoing colourisation controversy, Lucas opens his statement by proclaiming that the destruction of American film heritage in this manner is “only the tip of the iceberg” (in United States G.P.O., 1988 p. 479). He then proceeds to highlight the fact that, as alluded to above, American law at the time did not adequately protect artists from “having their life work distorted and their reputations ruined” by unauthorised changes (ibid). Undeniably informed by his difficulties with Warner Bros. and Universal Studios during the production of his first two feature films, which involved studio-imposed cuts, Lucas at this point seeks to emphasise the importance of protecting directors from what he refers to elsewhere as “arbitrary” studio interference (Rubin, 2006 p. 49). At the same time, well aware of the potential applications of the increasingly sophisticated digital technology he was pioneering, Lucas is also determined to safeguard the work of artists against such retroactive manipulation:

> [i]f something is not done now to clearly state the moral rights of the artists, current and future technology will alter, mutilate, and destroy for future generations the subtle human truths and higher human feelings that talented individuals within our society have created (in United States G.P.O., 1988 p. 479).

This key excerpt explicitly highlights an important issue underpinning Lucas’s conception of the moral rights of an artist. The potential for an artist’s creative vision to be so drastically “altered”, “mutilated”, and even “destroyed” without their consent demands legal protection. For Lucas, this would safeguard the preservation of artistic integrity by preventing unnecessary changes which would otherwise be to the detriment of both the artist and society as a whole. As I show in Chapter 4, the ability for third-parties to reappropriate copyrighted material gives rise to a range of ethical, legal, and moral issues emblematic of our changing relationship to media in the digital age.

As may be expected Lucas offers a solution to the “problem” of moral rights. He cites a clause found in the Berne treaty that, in his words, allows an artist “the right to object to the defacement of his work” (ibid) and should henceforth be introduced into US law. Having already witnessed unwanted interference in his work, the greater threat of future defacement is arguably the biggest inspiration for Lucas. Equally important is the fact that this amendment would not simply prevent an artist’s work from being revised against their wishes; it would also ensure that the artist would retain full control over their work, hence guaranteeing it fully represents their original artistic intentions. To this end, Lucas moves on to describe what is possible with the technology of the time and prophetically looks to the future with a wary unease:

> [t]oday, engineers with their computers can add color to black-and-white movies, change the soundtrack, speed up the pace, and add or subtract material to the philosophical taste of the copyright holder. Tomorrow more

> advanced technologies will be able to replace actors with “fresher faces” or alter dialog and change the movement of the actors’ lips to match (in United States G.P.O., 1988 p. 479).

Lucas’s use of the phrase “the philosophical taste of the copyright holder” is particularly astute as it openly reinforces the logic that, for better or worse, in most cases an artist is not necessarily the legal “owner” of their creation. In so doing, he also strengthens his overarching argument that an artist’s creative vision is at the mercy of those holding the purse strings. Again evidently inspired by his own personal studio-dealings, this would fuel the apprehension of artists working in the industry against the uncertain backdrop of conglomeration which saw the transference and complication of copyright ownership. That is to say, as legal ownership of a piece may be open to change, so too may the agenda or philosophical tastes of those in control of it, ultimately meaning the original artist is helpless to oppose any alterations imposed upon it.

The problem with his merging of artist and copyright holder is the simple fact that many artists are not in the same position as Lucas, having at this stage in his career successfully launched the *Star Wars* universe and co-created the *Indiana Jones* franchise with close friend and collaborator Steven Spielberg (Taylor, 2016 p. 235). Added to this are the numerous projects released bearing his name as director, producer, or executive producer, as well as having overseen the growth of Lucasfilm – his own production company with subsidiaries at the forefront of special visual effects and digital filmmaking technology – since 1971 (Taylor, 2016 p. 109). Lucas, then, is the ultimate hyphenate having worn many creative hats throughout his career: a writer-director with a proficiency for editing who was also fortunate enough to assume the role of producer or executive producer when it suits thanks to his self-founded company.

With this in mind, Lucas would revisit the themes of creative autonomy and artistic integrity continually throughout his career. In an interview with Kevin Kelly and Paula Parisi (1997), he illustrates his argument by using the work of renowned sculptor Henry Moore. Continuing the thread of discussion surrounding the protection of an artist’s creative vision and the ineptitude of copyright holders, Lucas references the painting of a Moore sculpture by its owner to make it “fit better with her backyard” (quoted in Kelly and Parisi, 1997). Horrified at this, Lucas contends that only the *named artist* should have the right to retroactively edit their work: “[i]f Henry Moore came and said “I’ll paint it white,” that’s his business because he’s the artist. Whoever’s name is on the work, whoever’s reputation is on the line has the right to alter the work” (ibid). This example is, however, problematic. It is easy to assign Moore with full credit for his sculptures and defend his “right to alter” them as they are the product of his individual craftsmanship. While the director of a film is, debatably, the sole figure to which its success or failure is attributed, the product is nevertheless the result of a collaboration between many different creative individuals working as a team. Thus, as admitted by Lucas in the quote opening this section from the same interview – and

as will be revisited in depth later in this chapter – the process of identifying the artist responsible for a film has been a long-established and often controversial debate in film theory. This is particularly challenging in the case of Lucas who, as noted above, was able to combine multiple roles on his films. Thus, arguably we have an example here illustrating Lucas's inability to distinguish between his overlapping creative roles.

His disdain at the thought of second- or third-party copyright holders altering the work of named artists is equally palpable in the written statement prepared for the 1988 committee. On the theme of defacement, Lucas writes that those guilty of "alter[ing] or destroy[ing] works of art and our cultural heritage for profit or as an exercise of power are barbarians" (in United States G.P.O., 1988 p. 484). This is followed by an earnest plea that the "preservation of our cultural heritage" is something that must be introduced in law in order to prevent further "barbaric" defacements to cultural capital (ibid). The crux of his argument is centred on a seemingly unwavering respect for creativity and a reverence for cultural heritage that necessitates preservation for future generations, clearly evident when he writes that "[c]reative expression is at the core of our humanness. Art is a distinctly human endeavor. We must have respect for it if we are to have any respect for the human race" (ibid). It begs the question why these quotes were not present in his oration, given the powerful message they evoke: for Lucas, the defacement of art – whether for changes in taste, economic reasons, or a simple exercise in power – results in the loss of both the artist's original creative intent as well as a loss of respect for the people who let this "barbaric" behaviour occur. Nevertheless, as the Lucas-termed "subtle human truths" and "higher human feelings" disappear as a result of technologically-enabled defacements, it becomes apparent that a third attribute is lost. With reference to Walter Benjamin (2008), one can argue that these truths and feelings can otherwise be described as constituting the artwork's "genuineness" and help to solidify "its unique existence" as an original expression of artistic creativity (2008 p. 5). Therefore as Benjamin, originally writing in 1936 – and evincing a higher degree of prescience than Lucas forewarning the negative effects of technology for art – warns: "what shrinks in an age where the work of art can be reproduced by technological means is its aura" (2008 p. 7). The threat to genuineness and aura posed by digital technology is a clear motivation behind Lucas's passionate pleas for the preservation of cultural heritage. Furthermore, as discussed in the following chapter, this has formed much of the battle between producers and consumers of media in the digital age.

The material presented thus far suggests that Lucas has always been a vocal proponent of preserving cultural heritage and respecting an artist's creative vision. However, as I will go on to show, it becomes increasingly difficult to reconcile these views with his subsequent behaviour. Furthermore, his argument against the retrospective defacement of a named artist's work warrants re-evaluation given the myriad adjustments he made to the original *Star Wars* trilogy – particularly considering that he only directed one of the three films. That Lucas would overwrite his own creative vision by repeatedly tinkering with the

first, self-directed instalment initially released in 1977 raises its own series of problematic implications. Moreover, that he would notoriously go on to digitally edit the sequels, Irvin Kershner's *Star Wars: Episode V – The Empire Strikes Back* (1980) and Richard Marquand's *Star Wars: Episode VI – Return of the Jedi* (1983), poses a related series of questions with wide repercussions that touch on many of the themes discussed thus far in the thesis.

It has been widely reported that the "main purpose" of George Lucas's "reworking [of] the original trilogy was maintenance and preservation" of the original film negatives (Brooker, 2002 p. 63). In an interview discussing the release of the *Star Wars Trilogy: Special Edition* (1997) on DVD, however, Lucas claims that the "special edition ones are the films I wanted to make" (quoted in Associated Press, 2004). At this point he offers a thoughtful insight about the original films that is extremely important in the context about retroactive continuity and artistic vision. Outlining why the films were not re-released in their unaltered states, the director explains that "[t]he other movie, it's on VHS if anybody wants it. … I'm not going to spend the, we're talking millions of dollars here, the money and the time to refurbish that, because to me, it doesn't really exist anymore" (ibid). Despite this assertion, the original films were indeed eventually release on home media – albeit in a poor quality format as a result of the transfer from the 1993 LaserDisc release (Hutchinson, 2016). It is perhaps understandable that Lucas did not want to fully refurbish and release the original unaltered trilogy in a more-than-acceptable quality given the alleged unfeasible financial investment required, and speaks directly to the tension between art, commerce, and technology, which exists at the very heart of the medium. Nevertheless, his perfunctory account of why he re-released the original series has serious philosophical implications. Jonathan Gray (2016) asserts that

> [a]nything authored can be re-authored […]. Authorship, after all, is about power, about determining who has the ability and the right to speak for the text, and who gets to speak with the text. Authorship is authority, a position of power over a text, meaning, and culture. Hence, paratextual re-authoring assures that this power to speak is shared among many, and it disallows any text the ability to speak in one way continuously, unabated (2016 pp. 34 – 35).

I revisit this theory of paratextual re-authoring in the following chapter, however it is important to cite it here in relation to Lucas's apparent disregard for the authorial voices of Kershner and Marquand. It could be argued that his attempts to re-author *The Empire Strikes Back* and *Return of the Jedi* were an exercise in reassuming power he ceded at the time of their original production, having stepped back from directing due to health problems. His re-authoring not only manifested itself in the form of the numerous digital additions; Lucas reaffirmed his powerful dual-role as artist and copyright holder by lengthening the credit sequences for the *Special Edition* trilogy to include himself as director for the new versions.

Of added concern is his assertion that the original film has ceased to exist; contrary to this claim, there are at least two copies of the original negative; one resides in Lucasfilm's

vault and another in the Library of Congress's National Film Registry (Jenkins, 2016 p. 29; Taylor, 2016 pp. 385 – 386). On the subject of film negatives there is yet another particularly interesting twist to be found in a section from the director's written testimony. Having already prophesied how copyright holders will in the future be able to digitally replace actors and alter their performances on a whim, Lucas also anticipates the impact similar technology will have on physical film celluloid:

> [i]t will soon be possible to create a new "original" negative with whatever changes or alterations the copyright holder of the moment desires […]. In the future it will become even easier for old negatives to become lost and be "replaced" by new altered negatives. This would be a great loss to our society. Our cultural history must not be allowed to be rewritten (in United States G.P.O, 1988 p. 485).

Once again, it is unclear why yet another pivotal excerpt would not be included in the director's spoken testimony as it further illustrates his determination to preserve "cultural history" from being rewritten by the barbaric, faceless copyright holders to whom he continually refers. It seems reasonable to suggest that Lucas decided against vocalising this potent observation given the changes the director was making, or at least planning to make at this stage, to the films in question, lest his sentiments appear to be disingenuous. Revisiting Benjamin, who asserts that "*the whole province of genuineness is beyond technological* […] *reproducibility*" (2008 p. 6; original italics), one could even argue that by reproducing the original *Star Wars* trilogy, Lucas is himself simultaneously rewriting what he describes as "cultural history" and undermining the "genuineness" of the trilogy. This apparent hypocrisy was not lost on the large number of fans who expressed their unhappiness at his behaviour, particularly those identified in Chapter 4.

Lucas's "meddling" predates the theatrical release of the *Special Edition* trilogy in 1997 and subsequent home media collections. As Ben Kirby (2017) describes in great detail Lucas's initially subtle amendments began as early as 1980, when *Star Wars* was re-released with its new suffix *Episode IV – A New Hope* following the success of *The Empire Strikes Back* (Kirby, 2017). This would be the first in a long line of adjustments made to the original films by Lucas, who seemed to take greater pride in doing the things he so vociferously warned against in 1988.

To take Lucas's example of altering dialogue, the original trilogy provides some examples with which to illustrate his penchant for retroactive continuity directly contravening the spirit of his 1988 testimony. The character of Boba Fett, physically portrayed by Jeremy Bulloch in *The Empire Strikes Back* and *Return of the Jedi*, originally featured the spoken dialogue of Jason Wingreen (Phillips, 2016) – with Bulloch correctly assuming his voice would be replaced in post-production (Ryan, 2010). In a change made for the 2004 DVD release Lucas replaced Wingreen's voice with that of Temuera Morrison, the actor who plays Boba's father in the prequel trilogy, in an attempt to highlight Fett's parentage and tie the

prequel and original trilogies together. While this did not necessitate altering the movement of lips (Boba Fett wears a face-obscuring helmet) it did nevertheless involve the performance of one actor being supplanted by that of another – albeit solely a vocal performance. The same fate would befall Dave Prowse, who portrayed series villain Darth Vader, whose dialogue was replaced by the voice of James Earl Jones; Lucas claims this had always been his intention (Scanlon, 1977). Additionally, Lucas would insert dialogue for Vader in the Blu-ray release of *Return of the Jedi* that had not been present in any previous iteration of the film (Kirby, 2017). Despite Vader also wearing concealing headgear – once more negating the need to alter the performer's lips – this does yet again demonstrate that Lucas was not averse to overwriting the original spoken dialogue of his actors. While these alterations do not drastically affect the narrative of the films it would not be overly-dramatic to posit that they could be considered as defacements comparable to those Lucas warned of in 1988. Indeed, as will be seen later in the thesis, this appears to be the case for some fans of the franchise.

As well as altered dialogue Darth Vader can be used as an example illustrating Lucas's concerns surrounding the introduction of "fresher faces" and a manifestation of what was described earlier as the teleological myth of human replacement. Having already "sour[ed]" his relationship with Prowse due to the dialogue dubbing debacle (Wintle, 2014), Lucas employed a different actor (Sebastian Shaw) to portray the character in the final act of *Return of the Jedi*. In yet another innocuous act of retroactive continuity Lucas digitally removed Shaw's eyebrows for the 2004 home media release when Vader's face is revealed. Given that the eyebrows, or lack thereof, do not serve a larger part within *Star Wars* canon, Lucas's actions both reveal an obsession with minutiae and demonstrate an exercise in power as creative overseer. Furthermore, Shaw's likeness was originally used to represent the character's "Force ghost" at the film's climax. However, in his sustained attempts to retroactively tie the trilogies closer together, Lucas would replace Shaw by digitally inserting the apparition of Hayden Christiansen, the actor responsible for playing the younger character in *Attack of the Clones* (2002) and *Revenge of the Sith* (2005). Similar digital editing techniques were used in a comparable manner throughout his prequel trilogy, as the technology had reached a stage enabling Lucas to create fully-manipulable likenesses of his actors. For example, Temuera Morrison's likeness would be used as the basis for the Galactic Republic's clone army, while digital characters would be created from scans of the actors to be used in particularly extravagant fight scenes with physics-defying choreography (Shenk, 2002). More subtly, Count Dooku's (Christopher Lee) actions would at times be performed by a stunt double before Lee's face was later digitally inserted, and the performance of Ewan McGregor was finely manipulated in order to allow better integration with original digital characters (ibid). The creation of these digital puppets and their use within wholly-digital worlds manifests the consternation of D. N. Rodowick (2007) cited in Chapter 2 about the "replacement of the analog world by a digital simulation" (2007 p. 4).

Indeed, this is part of what made the prequel trilogy so unique; the films would usher in a new era of digital filmmaking and foreground the possibilities afforded by digital technology in major motion pictures.

Given this, it could be suggested that Lucas's use of groundbreaking techniques reflects an innate desire to align himself with the future of filmmaking by employing digital technology to manipulate its history. Indeed, rather than preserving cultural history Lucas, with two of the original films, appears instead to have defaced the work of other named artists in his role as producer to subsequently exercise his creative will – completely undermining the spirit and potency of his defence of cultural heritage and preservation in 1988. To borrow Lucas's terminology: despite his continued claims as overall creative overseer for the series – a self-styled Creator with a capital 'C' (Taylor, 2016 p. xx) – he, as *copyright holder*, is responsible for defacing the work of Kershner and Marquand by rewriting their entries in film history, as well as his own. Unsurprisingly this raises several issues regarding authorship and creative control, particularly when considered alongside Lucas's own thoughts on the subjects, specifically in the quote which opens this section. Having already conceded that "somebody should be designated the author" the director goes on to state that, in the spirit of his testimony, it should not be "the corporation that owns the copyright that sells it to another corporation that sells it to another corporation" (in Kelly and Parisi, 1997). While this opinion does reflect a veritable determination that an artist should retain full control over their work, an irony arises when one remembers that Lucas, as founder, eventually sold Lucasfilm to Disney in 2012 (Solvej, 2012). Revisiting Lucas's written statement unveils a unique proposition aimed at solving the problem of authorship:

> [i]t has been suggested that the problem of the defacement of our films could be solved legally by removing the credit of the director and the writer. I ask, "What about the production designer, the cinematographer, the editor and the others who contributed to that central artistic vision?" And the answer comes back, "Well, we will remove their credits too; that way no one gets hurt" (in United States G.P.O., 1988 p. 489).

As Lucas's rhetoric demonstrates, this would solve the issue however it is indisputably unfeasible and neglectful. He is attempting to highlight the fact that without the credit of those creative artists responsible, the copyright holders will then be free to alter and deface their art in order to suit their own desires, against the will of the artists. Hence the ultimate conclusion that "it is the artist's unique vision that must be respected, that must be protected" (in United States G.P.O., 1988 p. 483).

Lucas has openly acknowledged how the issue of directorial credit has plagued him throughout his professional career, resulting in his resignation from the Directors Guild of America (in Kline, 1999 pp. 139 – 140). Having already noted that two of the original *Star Wars* films were directed by others, this seems unsurprising. Famously foregoing opening credits for an attention-grabbing, bombastic text crawl opening, relegating the film credits

until the end of the pictures resulted in controversy with the American Directors and Writers Guilds (Taylor, 2016 p. 209 – 210) which ultimately led to Lucas being forced to pay a fine before he finally resigned from both (Winning, 2016 p. 36). While this may seem a minor issue to raise, it does nevertheless mark another incident in Lucas's perennially antagonistic relationship with the Hollywood system and highlights his perseverance to have things done his way. While the thesis will later move on to look at how Lucas's behaviour has affected the relationship with his fans, the chapter will now go on to explore this pursuit of self-determination and consider Lucas's behaviour in the context of the authorship debate.

3.3 – Authorship, Control, and the Pursuit of Creative Autonomy

> ***Motion pictures are built on the writer's foundation. All of the creative people involved – the cameramen, the actors, and everybody – then look to the director for guidance, and they trust the director and his vision. That is the vision that we are trying to protect***
>
> George Lucas (quoted in United States G.P.O., 1988 p. 480)

The enduring debate surrounding creative control and artistic integrity offers an interesting opportunity to retrospectively reappraise George Lucas's body of work, particularly *Star Wars*, given the material cited thus far. A prominent and well-documented topic appearing in film discourse "as early as 1913" (Hayward, 2006 p. 31), it is not the aim of this thesis to engage in detail with the convoluted and often controversial aspects of the German *Autorenfilm* (ibid), the *politique des auteurs* of the *Cahiers du Cinéma* collective (Wollen, 1992), or even Andrew Sarris's divisive *auteur* theory. Rather than becoming engulfed by the subtleties of this longstanding concern the following section is instead more focused on the overarching links between control and autonomy, using Lucas as a case study to synthesise these themes. At the same time, due attention will be given to some key philosophies and ideas found in the writings cited above in order to enhance my evaluation of Lucas and his passion for artistic autonomy. Having already scrutinised Lucas's own views by deconstructing his 1988 testimonies, I will now attempt to reconcile his pleas for artistic integrity with other interviews, comments, and actions made throughout his career which seemingly undermine the spirit of 1988.

Some academics who have written about film authorship share a similar hypothesis to Lucas which acknowledges the pivotal role played by film directors. Reflecting on the work of Howard Hawks, Robin Wood (1975) describes how the "unifying and organising presence" of a director inherently "seems crucial" to a film's success (quoted in Caughie, 1981 p. 60). Likewise Erin Hill-Parks (2011) makes an almost identical observation, asserting that Hollywood *auteurs* "can be recognised by providing a unifying voice behind his or her texts" (2011 p. 1). Even Sarris's controversial *auteur* theory recognised the importance of the director's presence, positing that the combination of their "technical competence" alongside a

“distinguishable personality” allowed their identifiable signature to be felt onscreen (quoted in Braudy et al, 1992 p. 586). Promoting the competence, presence, unifying force, and vision of a director in such a way constructs the perception of this singular figure as a creative focal point distilling the efforts of those involved in a film. This therefore seems to be a practical way to reconsider George Lucas; however, as noted previously, early obstacles to his artistic autonomy and directorial independence caused him to become somewhat predisposed with creative oversight.

It would be the unwanted intrusions and arbitrary studio interference Lucas faced while working on *THX 1138* and *American Graffiti* that solidified his determination to retain as much creative control as possible over his future projects. Indeed, as summarised by Michael Rubin (2006), these studio intrusions would have a profound effect:

> [t]he changes the studios made to his films may or may not have mattered to audiences, but the fact that they could change them at all was unconscionable. Having what was called “final cut” – the legal authority to say when the film was done – was the cornerstone of this creative control (2006 pp. 58 – 59).

Unsurprisingly, the “unconscionable” threat of having his work defaced proved to be a distinct motivation behind Lucas’s impassioned testimonial speech and acted as inspiration for his research and development into filmmaking technology that would afford directors much more control over their work. These first two films, particularly *American Graffiti*, are useful examples to explore in terms of the collaborative nature of their production. They reveal how the flexible character of Lucas as a creative “unifying presence” contrasts completely with his self-aware reputation at the time as a “cold, weird director” (quoted in Kline, 1999 p. 38).

Having acknowledged that a film is built on the foundation of a script, Lucas has elsewhere admitted that “I’m not a very good writer. It’s very, very hard for me […] When I sit down, I bleed on the page” (quoted in Kline, 1999 p. 18). As a result, Lucas’s early films feature screenplay collaborations with other writers; *THX 1138* would find Lucas sharing writing duties with Walter Murch while *American Graffiti* featured a significant contribution from Willard Huyck and Gloria Katz (Kline, 1999 p. xxi). Discussing their input in a 1974 interview with Larry Sturhahn, the director provides an interesting summary of their work on the screenplay which provokes some engaging thoughts surrounding credit and artistic collaboration:

> They didn’t change the structure; what they did was improve the dialogue, make it funnier, more human, truer. And they also wrote in the Steve and Laurie relationship. They took those scenes and made them work. So though they improved it, it was basically my story. The scenes are mine; the dialogue is theirs. But it’s hard to be cut and dry about something like that because, of course, they completely changed some scenes, and others were left intact (quoted in Kline, 1999 p. 18).

While this highlights an attempt to appear collaborative and open to suggestion on his part, it is important to note Lucas's choice of language and specific wording of certain phrases. Despite recognising that they "improved" the dialogue by giving the script a more "human" sensibility, Lucas is equally forthright in his determination that the story, structure, indeed the scenes remain *his* – even though he admits that Huyck and Katz "completely changed" some of them. Further intrigue arises when Lucas combines his humble admission with the direct observation that "it's hard to be cut and dry about something like that". At once, then, Lucas attempts to both highlight the combination of various creative ideas and assert his control over the piece, while at the same time downplaying the importance of it all.

American Graffiti would be a pivotal project for Lucas who, like many of his contemporaries, formed an informal cabal behind the camera that would work with him on subsequent films. Including Huyck and Katz – who he is described as having "leaned heavily on" during the writing process (Taylor, 2016 p. 138) – this group would also include his wife Marcia as editor and producer Gary Kurtz. While very much the artistic creation of George Lucas, requiring several years of intense research and pre- pre-production, *Star Wars* is at once the product of his fiercely-protected independent vision as well as the collaborative of these notable figures. Other influential contributors include Brian de Palma's input to the film's iconic opening crawl (Jones, 2016 p. 239), Ben Burtt and his groundbreaking work on sound design, the concept art created by Ralph McQuarrie – without which the film might never have been made (Taylor, 2016 pp. 146 – 157) – and the unforgettable score produced by John Williams, not to mention the pioneering practical and special effects of those involved with ILM, Lucas's own visual effects company.

Contrary to the idea of Lucas as an obsessive director opposed to the idea of working with others, the circumstances surrounding the production of the original *Star Wars* film illuminate the fact that Lucas was, in actuality, able to work with others and accept creative input from those around him. This is something the director admits himself, conceding to Charley Lippincott that "[i]t's more fun to have other people make suggestions, so you don't have to do all the work" (quoted in Taylor, 2016 p. 173). Indeed, Chris Taylor (2016) moves on to describe how Lucas was very open to working with others, claiming that "[t]here was a lot of room for other craftspeople, so long as Lucas trusted their competence" (ibid). Thus, while it would seem that Lucas remained fully flexible and amenable to creative collaboration, one could argue that this caveat would be better read as "so long as Lucas trusted their competence *to work within his boundaries and acquiesced to his demands when necessary*" – something suggested in the behind-the-scenes making-of documentaries accompanying the prequel films (Bushkin, 2005; Shenk, 2001, 2002).

Taylor's observation therefore offers two interpretations. Firstly, Lucas valued collaboration as long as his collaborator(s) remained professionally competent. Secondly, he also supported teamwork only if those on the team were competent enough to understand who had final say. Given the chaotic and oftentimes disorganised nature of production on

films such as these it is easy to identify Lucas as the unifying force behind them. Once quoted as saying "I came out of film school, so I really was a *filmmaker – which means doing it all*" (in Kline, 1999 p. 20; original italics), Lucas's emphasis on "doing it all" fed a professional obligation to provide such a presence. It also ensured the fulfilment of his personal commitment to creative oversight, having also admitted that delegation is "very hard for me" (quoted in Kemp, 2016 p. 40). This single-mindedness ultimately resulted in Lucas suffering health problems during production of the original *Star Wars* film, certainly informing his decision to avoid directing its two sequels despite an overwhelming desire to control everything from the director's chair. As will be revealed, however, this did not stop him from having the ability to affect the daily work on-set.

An important detail to consider at this point is that in spite of the negative studio reactions to his work and their subsequent revisions, Lucas's first three films had been reasonably well-received by the public and critics alike – particularly impressive given the relatively small production budgets the director was working with. While *THX 1138*, made for $777,000.77 (Leva, 2004), would "land with a thud" at the box office (Jones, 2016 p. 125) the film would later be reconsidered in a more positive light. By comparison, *American Graffiti* and *Star Wars* would have a much greater success: the former was made for $600,000 and would go on to gross over $250 million at the box office (Taylor, 2016 p. 132) while the latter would eventually gross $775 million globally, having been made for $11 million (Mifsud, 2017 p. 8). Consequently, it would be reasonable to posit that Lucas's resolve as a creative, independent artist was emboldened as a result; vindication of his "crusade" against Hollywood and an enhanced determination to continue working outside the system or, at the very least, use it to his advantage while remaining independent. In the words of late cinematographer and longtime Lucas ally Haskell Wexler, the director "continued to beat Hollywood at its own game, on his own terms" (quoted in Rubin, 2006 p. 485). As such, Lucas would not be deterred from using this very system to his own advantage and would not let stringent union regulations prevent him from making his projects – as evidenced with *The Empire Strikes Back*. At the same time, his reliance on the very system he so frequently disagreed with demonstrates a tight interdependence and not the much-vaunted independence he so desperately craved.

Given his decision to retire from directing "[w]ith the trauma of directing *Star Wars* still fresh in his mind" (Kemp, 2016 p. 40), Lucas began to lose his fondness for the craft during this troublesome period of his life. Despite insisting in 1977 that making movies is "really fun" (quoted in Kline, 1999 p. 63), Lucas is quoted during the production of *The Empire Strikes Back* as saying "I hate directing. It's like fighting a fifteen-round heavyweight boxing bout with a new opponent everyday" (Kline, 1999 p. xi). Increasingly disenfranchised during production for *Return of the Jedi*, he would reinforce this by proclaiming that "I dislike directing. I hate the constant dealing with volatile personalities. Directing is emotional frustration, anger, and tremendous hard work" (ibid). It seems surprising, then, that he would

revive the franchise by later writing and directing the prequel trilogy. Cynically, one could suggest that it was the potential for further financial reward which motivated his continued involvement with the brand – combined, the films would make over $1 billion at the global box office (Mifsud, 2017 p. 9). However, given the fact that *Star Wars* had been a longtime passion project for the director necessitating a significant amount of personal investment and sacrifice, it seems more likely that Lucas was more concerned with being able to maintain oversight of production via a more hands-off approach.

Lucas muses on this balance between economic feasibility and personal investment in a 1983 interview in which he admits that, while *Star Wars* "became a priority; it was one of those things that had to be done", his decision to keep the universe alive following the conclusion of the original trilogy "depends on how well this one does, what the economics of the situation are and what my personal life is" (quoted in Scanlon, 1983). In light of his retirement, Lucas was thus forced to hire directors with a view to "direct[ing] the film[s] remotely" (Taylor, 2016 p. 285) – that is, by telling Irvin Kershner (*The Empire Strikes Back*) and Richard Marquand (*Return of the Jedi*) what to do. This would essentially allow Lucas to remain in overall control without having to become involved in the stresses encountered during life on set. Unsurprisingly, this attempt at delegation caused strife for Lucas during the production of *The Empire Strikes Back*. This culminated in him eventually replacing Gary Kurtz, in Machiavellian fashion, with Howard Kazanjian before the film had even been released (Taylor, 2016 pp. 319 – 320) – a particularly important event in Lucas's career at which point he began to more fully assert *his* control over his projects.

Lucas would indeed exert far more control over production during *Return of the Jedi* despite his claims that the "amount of work" would prevent him from officially directing the film himself (Taylor, 2016 p. 324). Described as being somewhat more "flexible" than Kershner, Marquand would in essence be working as a puppet director under the direct auspices of Lucas who "effectively acted as a codirector" (Taylor, 2016 p. 325). Jones explores the Lucas-Marquand relationship in more detail. He suggests that the latter was initially "intimidated by George" who had seemingly "harassed" Marquand "into more or less doing what he wanted", this before Lucas would ultimately "take over the film" to ensure production progressed at his pace (2016 p. 310). As Jones pointedly and succinctly summarises: "Lucas knew he was in Marquand's way – but he didn't care" (ibid). Paul Scanlon (1983) directly probes this infamous hierarchical coupling in an interview with Lucas after the film's release, which sees the pair discuss Lucas's role as executive producer:

> **[Scanlon] Often, the title "executive producer" is an honorarium. Many never visit the set.**
>
> [Lucas] Well, in this case, it's a very collaborative situation, and the directors know that going in. I've got to find a director who's willing to give up some of his domain to me and is willing to work with me and accept the fact that he's essentially doing a movie that's been established, that ultimately I'll have final

> say. There are a number of directors who just can't do that (Scanlon, 1983; original emphasis).

Taken alongside Lucas's established ideas of collaboration and the competence of his collaborators, this declaration indicates that rather than being fully open to combining artistic proposals and creative concepts from other visionary sources, working with Lucas appears to be a relatively one-sided process involving his creative will being imposed on others – something he would later unashamedly admit to and seek to downplay (Jones, 2016 p. 310). It seems disingenuous, too, that Lucas would later promote respect and protection for the "director and his creative vision" (quoted in United States G.P.O., 1988 p. 480) having so overtly undermined that of Marquand only five years earlier and again later with the myriad digital alterations.

This is supported by another subsequent interview in which Lucas describes his collaborative oversight in making the two sequels:

> Ultimately, those films are a little bit different from the normal way films are made. They were done more like television shows, with me as executive producer, casting them, writing the scripts, determining the look, everything. I shot second unit and I was there every day to approve everything. *Empire* is Kersh's movie, he was a huge creative force on it, but if he strayed too far off the path, we wouldn't go there. It was a collaborative thing […]. It wasn't really out of my control at all. The deal was that they would handle the daily operations on the set and I would be the overseer (quoted in Smith, 2002 p. 32).

Once more, this suggests that Lucas was clearly not averse to using his status and power in order to ensure that his unifying presence would supersede that of the directors, imposing his will as he saw fit and highlighting an insatiable passion for artistic control – ultimately manifesting itself in the *Special Edition* versions.

Having retired the franchise after stepping-back from directing, eventually recognising that "it]s probably easier to do these things than to farm them out" (Jones, 2016 p. 310), Lucas would continue in his capacity as (executive) producer on a number of projects for close associates. This began in earnest in 1979 with *More American Graffiti* and would go on to include *Body Heat* (1981), directed by longtime Lucas-scribe Lawrence Kasdan, the *Indiana Jones* series co-created with Steven Spielberg (1981 – present), and other Lucasfilm productions such as *Labyrinth* (1986), *Howard the Duck* (1986), and *Willow* (1988) (Kline, 1999 pp. xxi – xvi). Additionally, Lucas would begin developing *The Young Indiana Jones Chronicles* for television in the late 1980s and early 1990s (Taylor, 2016 p. 366). Rising from his philanthropic efforts at developing educational programming – most clearly evident in his founding of the George Lucas Educational Foundation in 1991 (Jones, 2016 p. 372) – this project was another pivotal moment in Lucas's career for two reasons. Firstly, while allowing him more creative oversight without having to become involved in daily struggles on set, the series was to be "something of an experiment in digital filmmaking"

(Jones, 2016 p. 373) that enabled Lucas to finally employ first-hand the technology he had been researching and developing since the 1970s. Secondly, and equally important, was Lucas's decision to partner with producer Rick McCallum, a working relationship that would continue for the prequel *Star Wars* trilogy. McCallum is, as the thesis will go on to explore, a divisive figure in *Star Wars* fandom for his role in aiding Lucas's enhancement of the original films. Worth analysing here, however, are his comments regarding said enhancements given the discussion at the beginning of this chapter.

In a contemplative piece questioning whether or not George Lucas – like Ted Turner and his film colourisation – is "tampering with history" by revisiting and "improving" the original *Star Wars* films, Mark Caro (1997) includes Rick McCallum's perspective on the debate surrounding the *Special Edition* trilogy. Using similar language to that of Lucas in his defence of artistic autonomy and the need to preserve cultural history, McCallum defends the director by referring to him as an "artist" who should "have the same right as any writer, sculptor" to revisit their work (quoted in Caro, 1997). Returning to the examples of Hal Roach, Henry Moore, and Ted Turner, it would appear that McCallum shares Lucas's opinion that only the named artist should be able to retroactively change their work – not an external copyright holder. Indeed, McCallum's defence of Lucas is clear in the following statement: "Does a filmmaker have the right to go back and get the film the original way he envisioned it? Ask any director if he wanted to go back and fix a film, because of all of the compromises he had to make, and he would" (ibid). Not only does this illustrate McCallum's respect of Lucas as creative source, it also channels Gray's theory of re-authoring from above. Once more, Lucas's decision to repeatedly go back and fix the original films is a reaffirmation of his right to do so in his dual-role of artist and copyright holder. Moreover, one can immediately observe here how the amenable McCallum can be judged to have had sufficient competence to satisfy Lucas's needs, and it would therefore seem apparent that McCallum as producer acted as a more compliant and accommodating foil than Kurtz or Kazanjian before him in enabling Lucas to realise his artistic vision.

3.4 – George Lucas, Art, and the Digital Cinema Revolution

> ***Digital in film is just like digital in writing. It makes the medium much more malleable; you can make a lot more changes. You can cut and paste and move things around and think in a more fluid style – and I love that***
>
> George Lucas (quoted in Kelly and Parisi, 1997)

While it has elsewhere been claimed that digital technology reached its "watershed" in the mid-1980s (Elsaesser, 2012 p. 238) – notably alongside the aforementioned colourisation controversy and ensuing debate about artistic moral rights – it was during the production of *Star Wars* in the previous decade that George Lucas began to see how useful computers and digital technology could be in the filmmaking process. For Lucas, these tools could play

an invaluable role in “augment[ing] a filmmaker’s powers”, affording them “more control” over production and making the process itself much more “efficient” by concentrating power around the film’s creative focal point: the director (Rubin, 2006 p. 77). Bob Rehak (2018) agrees, suggesting that

> [Lucas’s] interest in digital technology [...] was never exclusively, or even primarily, visual in orientation. Rather, his use of computers seems to be based on an agenda to expand the pre- and postproduction toolset available to filmmakers – and by implication the control that the director-producers can exert over their artistic product (2018 p. 92).

Not only does this highlight how far ahead of the curve Lucas was, it also illustrates the reasoning behind his desire to research, develop, and implement such technology in his work – the pursuit of creative control and artistic autonomy alongside the wish to streamline the process. Nowhere is this more clearly evident than in his mission statement: “How do we break down the old system and make it easier for us to actually make movies?” (Rubin, 2006 p. 5). At the same time, a number of potential disadvantages linked to this new technology began to manifest themselves – something Lucas addressed in 1988 with reference to the “destruction of our film heritage” (in United States G.P.O., 1988 p. 479). The director’s testimony explicitly deals with technological aspects, more generally touching upon the philosophical questions concerning the rights of artists. However, his concerns about the confluence between art and technology are insightful when analysed over a longer period of time.

One of the crises associated with our transition towards a 21st Century digital cinema in current critical discourse involves the film-text’s loss of aura and status as a work of art. Indeed, this concern has been gestating since the early 20th Century, present in the writings of Benjamin cited earlier. More recently, this anxiety has resurfaced in the works of Thomas Elsaesser (2012), André Gaudreault and Philippe Marion (2015), and D. N. Rodowick (2007), all of whom echo Benjamin to lament this loss in similar ways. Elsaesser contends that films “no longer command the space of singularity and closure we traditionally expect of a “work of art”” (2012 p. 24). As developed in Chapter 5, this is largely due to what Rodowick identifies as a “*decentering*” of the film-text (2007 p. 28; original italics) which, with reference to Chapter 2, finds its roots in the destabilisation of cinema’s hegemony.

Bearing his ardent defence of the arts in mind it would be natural to assume that George Lucas shared these concerns. His bold proclamation made in a 1974 interview, discussing the production of *American Graffiti*, suggests a more complex picture:

> [m]y thing about art is that I don’t like the word *art* because it means pretension and bullshit, and I equate those two directly. I don’t think of myself as an artist, and I don’t think I ever will […]; I’m a craftsman. I don’t make a work of art; I make a movie (quoted in Kline, 1999 p. 21).

This follows an interesting admission made in the same interview in which Lucas divulges that he “like[s] making movies” and “the physical act of filmmaking”, even likening the process to that of “sculpture or painting” (quoted in Kline, 1999 p. 20). As seen in Chapter 2, this comparison would eventually come to be directly associated with the emergence of digital filmmaking techniques (see Manovich, 1995). As I will show, this is but one of several episodes revealing Lucas’s often contradictory relationship with art in the retroactive appreciation of his work. Indeed, in an interview later that year, Lucas would again scoff at the idea of his films being considered as art. Reflecting upon the reception of his first two films and the diverging opinions of studios and audiences, Lucas asserts “I don’t think that much about whether it’s going to be a great movie or a terrible movie, or whether it’s going to be a piece of art or a piece of shit” (quoted in Kline, 1999 p. 43). While these claims could be interpreted as simple provocative bravado it is intriguing to note how, despite deriding “art” and the connotations implied with its use, Lucas employs specific terminology to describe the filmmaking process as being like sculpture or painting – before later openly describing himself as a craftsman. This is a juxtaposition that immediately brings to mind thoughts of artisanship and the application of creative skill which Lucas revisits in various subsequent interviews, illustrating a not-unnatural change of heart in light of a revised self-appraisal.

As I have shown, Lucas’s position would ultimately shift between the time of these interviews and his Senate testimony some fourteen years later. This re-evaluation appears to have begun in earnest during the production of *Star Wars*, at which point he describes himself as an “artisan-cameraman” (quoted in Kline, 1999 p. 63). In 1994 Lucas would attempt to reconcile his self-ascribed artistic credentials with his pedigree as a businessman, professing that

> [a]t heart, I guess I’m an artist because I’ve spent my whole life making movies that I like to make. I live to make movies. And I’ve taken all my money and everything and put it back into making movies. And that’s all I really care about. So in that sense, I guess, the core of my life is making movies and the art of making movies (quoted in Kline, 1999 p. 182).

It is plausible that this change of heart is one of the major explanations behind Lucas’s various philanthropic endeavours to promote the arts. As well as his testimony he is responsible for having founded the Letterman Digital Arts Centre in 2005 (Taylor, 2016 p. 455). More recently, construction on his long-gestating, self-funded Lucas Museum of Narrative Art broke ground in March 2018 with an expected completion date set in 2021 (Sharp, 2018).

Lucas’s artistic sensibilities and appreciation for human endeavour are explicit in an interview in which he reveals his motivation for researching and developing digital filmmaking technology:

> [i]nstead of making film into a sequential assembly-line process where one person does one thing, takes it, and turns it over to the next person, I'm turning it more into the process of a painter or sculptor. You work on it for a bit, then you stand back and look at it and add some more onto it, then stand back and look at it and add some more. You basically end up layering the whole thing. Filmmaking by layering means you write, and direct, and edit all at once (quoted in Kelly and Parisi, 1997).

By seeking to afford the "sculptor-director" more power over their work, Lucas is subtly reinforcing the ideals of the singular artist and their independent creative vision. Kay Hoffmann (1998) supports this, reasoning that Lucas's process of filmmaking by layering is "strongly reminiscent of auteur cinema" (1998 p. 243). At the same time Hoffmann also remarks how this way of working is "commonly associated with the democratization and individual control of new media" (ibid). This is corroborated by Elsaesser who, examining the role of filmmakers working in the contemporary media landscape, asserts that digital cinema requires a "new kind of individual input, indeed manual application of craft and skill" (2012 p. 311). Thus, for Elsaesser, it is this individual input and manual application of artisanal creativity that "marks the return of the "artist" as source and origin of the image" (ibid). This leads me to ask: if the film-text is losing its aura as a singular piece of art, is this quality instead being refocused on the practice of filmmaking itself?

Gaudreault and Marion develop the notion of filmmaking in the digital age as being akin to painting. They cite Jacques Aumont (2012) – and, perhaps unintentionally, channel Rick McCallum – who affirms that the possibilities of digital technology mean that "filmmakers have the right to change their minds and touch up their work, privileges until now reserved to painters" (quoted in Gaudreault and Marion, 2015 p. 56). Similarly, Matt Hanson (2003) foregrounds how "digital cinema's breaking down of technical barriers creates a sense of freedom", allowing directors to "play with images and ideas once the action has been "filmed"" (2003 p. 69). As noted earlier this is something Lucas has profited from, whether reintegrating studio-cut footage to *THX 1138* and *American Graffiti* or "improving" the original *Star Wars* films.

For some scholars, however, "artistic quality does not necessarily depend on this new ability to manipulate the image offered by digital technology" (Gaudreault and Marion, 2015 p. 56). That is, just because the technology enabled Lucas to revisit and "enhance" these films, this does not automatically equate to any heightened semblance of his artistic merits as a director. Much controversy surrounds Lucas's decision to retroactively alter the *Star Wars* films; dissension that extends beyond the ethically questionable behaviour of overwriting the two he did not direct. This predominantly includes the extremely negative fan reaction to his *Special Edition* trilogy (Brooker, 2002) and is compounded by his earlier testimony pleading for the preservation of cultural heritage and artistic vision. As such, it could be argued that in his preoccupation with how he could use these tools, Lucas failed to consider whether or not he *should* employ them in the first place – whether it was to

ameliorate his own films or to engineer the work of other directors to better-fit his original artistic intent.

As part of his concern with trying to streamline the filmmaking process and afford the director more creative control and authority over production, Lucas's work developing digital technology also helped to revolutionise film sound and audio quality in film theatres. As well as providing the impetus behind Hollywood's evolution "into a blockbuster industry in the 1970s" (Lewis, 2007 p. 68), *Star Wars* is widely championed for having "pioneered many elements of film sound", largely thanks to the unique and groundbreaking "sound design" work of Ben Burtt (Rubin, 2006 p. 190). As Rubin goes on to describe, because sound and audio would be a large part in the success of his films Lucas, innately, "wanted to push control of it farther than anyone had" (ibid). The director's focus on the quality of sound in projection – what Lucas asserts is an "extremely important part of creating mood and emotional experience" (quoted in Kline, 1999 p. 166) – resulted from difficulties during early screenings of the first *Star Wars* film. Having opted for the Dolby six-track stereo system, Lucas became frustrated to find that *Star Wars* was being screened inadequately because not every theatre could afford the necessary equipment (Taylor, 2016 p. 190). As a result this inspired the development of the Theatre Alignment Programme (TAP) as a means to standardise theatres and improve the overall quality of film projection.

The TAP initiative first took shape under the control of Lucasfilm employee Jim Kessler who shared Lucas's concerns about quality control and the substandard presentation of Lucasfilm-produced projects. Shared exasperation reached its zenith during the release period of *Raiders of the Lost Ark* (1981) because the film prints were reportedly "uneven" in quality (Rubin, 2006 p. 232). This had been the case with *Star Wars* and *The Empire Strikes Back*, a clear consequence of irregular standards resulting in the mismanagement of exhibition protocols and neglectful storage of film reels (ibid). Kessler subsequently attended the 1982 National Association of Theatre Owners (NATO) convention with colleague Tom Holman to present their Lucas-approved vision for exhibition standardisation (Rubin, 2006 p. 279). With the aim of preparing those theatres who had signed up to screen the upcoming *Return of the Jedi*, Lucasfilm representatives visited each location to properly configure their technical capabilities and ensure screenings met these new standards. Such was the positive impact and reception of the endeavour that other studios began "to pay TAP […] to maintain quality over their own blockbuster releases" (Rubin, 2006 p. 280).

During the same time Lucasfilm took a similar approach to enhance sound quality for exhibition and enable cinema chain owners to improve their theatres in a cost-effective manner. The resulting collaboration between Holman, Kessler, and Lucas would culminate in THX; a sound system which would be leased to locations which qualified for its use, via the TAP, and further enhance film projection by vastly improving sound quality (Rubin, 2006 pp. 282 – 283). This initiative would prove equally successful, eventually being "spun off […] as a

separate company in which Lucas held a minority stake" (Taylor, 2016 p. 416). Interestingly, although the business eventually expanded beyond the territory Lucasfilm wanted to occupy – film production – Lucas's continued involvement does nevertheless illustrate his desire for control, no matter how small.

As well as upgrading film projection and enhancing sound quality in theatres George Lucas would also be responsible for spearheading innovative developments in the editing suite. This is perhaps unsurprising given his longstanding love affair with the process, admitting in 1991 that "[m]y first love is editing […]. It's what I came out of, and it's still what I enjoy most" (quoted in Kline, 1999 p. 166). Described by Lucas as a "crusade in the beginning" that has since "paid off" (quoted in Kline, 1999 p. 169), his attempts to develop new editing technology resulted in the creation of the EditDroid. The system's origins can be traced to 1983 and the outset of a collaborative partnership between Lucasfilm and Convergence, a company responsible for creating editing hardware for the "low-end market" (Rubin, 2006 p. 325). Rubin goes on to describe the development of the initial prototype in great detail (2006 pp. 326 – 329) and highlights an important milestone for the burgeoning.

EditDroid was demonstrated at the National Association of Broadcasters (NAB) convention in 1984 where it is described as having allegedly "shook the foundation of broadcaster technology" (Rubin, 2006 p. 336) for the "remarkable opportunity" (2006 p. 438) it offered for post-production facilities. However, a number of problems emerged to coalesce following a breakdown in the relationship between Lucasfilm and Convergence that stifled the potential impact of EditDroid. A brief summary of its failings would be as follows: despite being ahead of its time in some respects, an increasingly competitive and diverse marketplace concerned with preserving image value and quality, that would remain robust with the advent of high definition television (HDVT), and that wanted the most cost-effective way of doing this, ensured that the EditDroid never really fulfilled the potential expected of it at the 1984 NAB conference (Rubin, 2006 pp. 433 – 451).

3.5 – Conclusion

> ***I'm not happy that corporations have taken over the film industry, but now I find myself at the head of a corporation, so there's a certain irony there. I have become the very thing that I was trying to avoid***
>
> George Lucas (quoted in Kelly and Parisi, 1997)

Ultimately, the relative failure of EditDroid occurred at the beginning of cinema's latest cyclical evolution to mirror the equally staggered passages to sound and colour identified in Chapter 2, thus supporting Elsaesser's theme of technical continuation. Nevertheless, George Lucas's continued attempts to revolutionise the filmmaking process, and afford

directors more creative authority over their films in doing so, matches the entrepreneurial spirit of those working to technologically evolve the medium.

Lucas's position in film history encourages us to revisit the relationship inherent to cinema between art, commerce, and technology. His testimonial defence of an artist's moral rights and pleas for the preservation of cultural heritage present him as an integral champion of artistic autonomy and independence, a considerable evolution of character since deriding art early in his career. The spoken and written testimonies have shown how his passionate defence of the arts now seems disingenuous under reconsideration. For example, having proclaimed that only the named artist should be able to alter their work, Lucas would be guilty of using his status as copyright holder to retroactively change the work of other directors so that they better suited *his* artistic intentions. Not only does this behaviour raise fundamental ethical, legal, and moral questions for copyright, it also legitimises his prescient claims in 1988 for the potential capabilities of digital filmmaking technology in the hands of third-parties.

Chapter 4 – New Media and the Democratisation of Filmmaking

Digital filmmaking alters many of the conditions that led to the marginalization of previous amateur filmmaking efforts [...]. Digital cinema is a new chapter in the complex history of interactions between amateur filmmakers and the commercial media

(Jenkins, 2006 p. 146)

4.1 – Introduction

> ***To me, the great hope is that now […] people who wouldn't normally make movies are gonna be making them […]. And for once the so-called 'professionalism' about movies will be destroyed forever, you know, and it will become an art form. That's my opinion***
>
> Francis Ford Coppola (quoted in Bahr, Hickenlooper, and Coppola, 1991)

George Lucas's aforementioned proclamation that "[t]he power is with the people now" (quoted in Biskind, 1998 p. 75) encapsulates the countercultural energy and spirit associated with the New Hollywood period of the 1960s and 1970s. Spoken within such a specific and unique historical context, one can infer that the "people" Lucas refers to are himself and his contemporaries working as professionals within the industry. This chapter suggests that, in a modern setting, his truism can now be applied to the *people at large*, those described by Clive Young (2008) as "average people" (2008 p. 7). Furthermore, it re-evaluates the above forecast from his close associate Francis Ford Coppola and to what extent the democratising potential of new filmmaking technology has "destroyed professionalism" by opening the process up to new practitioners.

Both pronouncements openly allude to the breakdown of established hierarchies and envision a newer, level playing field that redefines what is meant by the term "professionalism" by introducing a new era of filmmaking. Expanding upon Pierre Bourdieu's (1993) field relations theory I later suggest that, rather than longstanding power structures experiencing a "rupture between a before and after of technological upheaval" (Gaudreault and Marion, 2015 p. 47), they have been challenged and made ripe for re-examination. Consequently, what it means to be a professional filmmaker must also be reanalysed: if professionalism is determined by financial reward, then anyone can now receive this thanks to the remuneration scheme used by YouTube (2019a) and comparable initiatives used on competing platforms which allow users to charge for access to their work.

The chapter then engages with the media industry's struggle to adapt to these new technologies and platforms that have seemingly afforded amateurs much more power over how they produce and distribute their content. By using the traditional practice of home moviemaking as a starting point I will consider how improved technology has enabled amateurs to do much more and broaden the scope of their projects, particularly fan filmmakers who take direct inspiration from copyrighted intellectual property (IP). Lucasfilm is used as a case study to depict the struggle facing many media companies seeking to protect their IP in contemporary society as it becomes much easier to take something, rework it however slightly, and publish it anew with a new name and artistic vision overwriting that of the original creator.

Upon introducing a new perspective into the tension between the moral rights of an artist and those of a copyright holder – that of fans and their right of free play – the final

section chronologically explores a small number of fan films demonstrating the evolution in techniques and technology used by them. This will involve considering the impact of the films, both philosophical and practical, by exploring how technological advances have informed what is possible in these independent projects. Of equal importance is the legality and morality of some of the texts, re-edits in particular, which seek to overwrite the creative vision of the original artist.

4.2 – Amateur Production as Established Practice within the Field of Power

> ***As the 20th century progressed, modern industry took hold and, for the first time, average people began to have ample leisure time. Rising to fill that void were entertainment and hobbies and, inevitably, the two mixed in many ways, including amateur filmmaking – better known as home movies***
>
> (Young, 2008 pp. 6 – 7)

Henry Jenkins (2005) asserts that amateur production is "basic human nature, it's something that's gone on for thousands of years" (quoted in Borland, 2005; see also Erstad and Wertsch, 2008). In regards to fan creativity this takes many forms, ranging from the practices of vidding and filk music Jenkins explores in depth elsewhere (2013) to the fan fiction and slash subgenre analysed in various accounts cited throughout this chapter. This expressiveness also manifests itself in filmmaking which, as inferred by Young, finds its roots in the traditional home movie. As such, this mode of amateur production presents itself as ripe for analysis in the overarching discussion.

In her study of the history of home movies and amateur filmmaking Patricia Zimmermann (2008) insists that "amateur film has paralleled the historical trajectory of commercial film since 1895" (2008 p. 1). Like Young, Zimmermann recognises how increasingly affordable and user-friendly technology began to break down barriers and served to democratise filmmaking for "average people", enabling them to exercise their directorial prowess as a result. However, we are later reminded that this practice was initially disregarded as an "irrelevant pastime", with the efforts of budding directors and photographers "dismissed as insignificant byproducts [sic] of consumer technology" (ibid). This intimates that while *technological* barriers may have been broken down, wider sociological ones remained resolutely entrenched and steadfast. Moreover, as I go on to illustrate, these have ultimately become blurred with incessant technological advances which threaten to destabilise long-established power structures.

Zimmermann is one of several scholars who simultaneously acknowledge and lament that amateur filmmaking has traditionally been "defined by negation: noncommercial, nonprofessional, unnecessary" (ibid). Laura Rascaroli (2014) likewise concedes that "the amateur continues to be widely characterized in negative ways" (2014 p. 237). She cites

Broderick Fox (2004) who synthesises a widely-held definition of amateurism as inherently "not sophisticated, not technically adept, not pretty or polished, not of popular interest, or perhaps most frequently and opaquely, "not professional"" (2004 p. 5). Fox outlines a number of related factors which fuelled the trivialisation of amateur filmmaking during the early-to-mid twentieth century. For example, he identifies monopolisation and standardisation within the film industry as causing the creation of "certain aesthetic standards and conventions as "professional"" which were, unsurprisingly, "unattainable" and "far beyond the amateur's reach" in terms of affordability and feasibility (2005 p. 6). Ryan Shand (2009) notes how the links between amateur production and the "technically "substandard"" as a consequence of these techno-economic impediments have subsequently "coloured aesthetic expectations of the mode" (2009 p. 156). It is therefore unsurprising when Fox ultimately posits that "[a]mateur media practice became a hobby, not the activity of producing viable or important product to be shared with others beyond the immediate family" (2004 p. 6). The association of amateur filmmaking-as-hobby and its relegation to domesticity yet again conjure feelings of trivialisation, implying that it was regarded as nothing more than a frivolous pursuit of the idle classes rather than a craft to be taken seriously.

It would be plausible to suggest here that the "unattainable" standards and ensuing "coloured aesthetic expectations" demonstrate a clear cause-and-effect of Bourdieu's theory of cultural production in action. Zimmermann's description of amateur film having historically "paralleled" that of its commercial, professional counterpart is particularly apt here; parallelism inherently suggests that there is an imagined barrier between amateur and professional filmmaking, one which informs the accounts of Fox, Rascaroli, Shand, and others included here. While these scholars consummately describe the effects of this division Bourdieu's cultural production model provides a meaningful explanation for the divide itself. For Randall Johnson (1993) Bourdieu's schema shows how the "reproduction of social structures" leads to "unequal power relations", resulting in a rigid socio-economic hierarchy which has been engrained in society (Johnson, 1993 p. 2). Those cited thus far indicate this in relation to filmmaking: while amateur production exists, it has traditionally done so on the other side of a divide separating it from distinguished professional material, but both forms co-exist within an overarching hierarchical framework – what Bourdieu dubs the "Field of Power" (1993 p. 38).

Reproduced below, Bourdieu's diagram depicts this field of power as containing the field of cultural production – encompassing both professional and amateur production – and the relationships between each field.

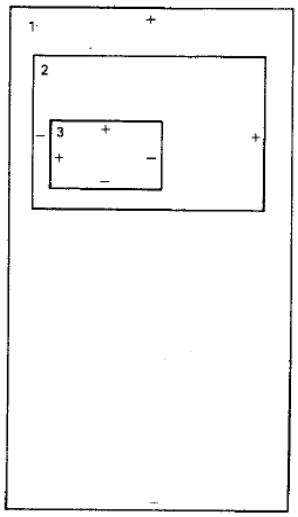

Figure 4.1 – The Field of Cultural Production and the Field of Power (Bourdieu, 1993 p. 38)

As illustrated above, the field of class relations [1] contains both the field of power [2] and the literary and artistic field [3]. This latter field [3] is situated at the negative pole within the field of power [2], occupying what Bourdieu identifies as a "*dominated position*" (1993 p. 38; original italics). As such, it is directly governed by its parent field [2], which is itself situated at the dominant pole in the field of class relations [1]. It follows, then, that those with more power are likely to be associated with a higher social class and have the means to greater affect the child field. Historically this status quo has been relatively easy to maintain; but as filmmaking technology has become more affordable, sophisticated, and user-friendly, making the craft much more accessible as a result, this naturally upsets the equilibrium and invites a rethinking of scholarly frameworks.

Due to field 3's unique position at the negative pole of field 2, and this field's own placement at the dominant pole of field 1, the field of cultural production is said to be the "site of a double hierarchy" (ibid). Bourdieu elaborates, noting how

> the specificity of the literary and artistic field is defined by the fact that the more autonomous it is […], the more it tends to suspend or reverse the dominant principle of hierarchization; but also that, whatever its degree of independence, it continues to be affected by the laws of the field which encompasses it, those of economic and political profit (1993 pp. 38 – 39).

Alternatively: as the literary and artistic field continues to "fulfil its on logic as a field" (Bourdieu, 1993 p. 38), the power structures surrounding it are forced to change accordingly; but must do so within the economic and political limitations placed upon it by the fields it finds itself within, and the relative position it occupies in them. As the chapter unfolds I will demonstrate how digital technology has forced a reconsideration of this, as more and more non-professional filmmakers successfully independently create and distribute their own films. The examples provided in the final section deal with this explicitly and raise thought-provoking concerns about the amateur-professional divide given the nature of their

production, with numerous instances involving varying levels of professional input during the creative process.

On hierarchies, Fox points to the role played by the media in reinforcing and "ingrain[ing] the amateur/professional dichotomy" (2004 p. 6) in publications distributed during the initial boom in home moviemaking, with advertisements and articles seemingly encouraging amateur filmmakers to "aspire towards an unattainable, and homogenized bar of professional aesthetics" (ibid). Martina Roepke (2013) indicates that it was, unsurprisingly, almost impossible for such inexpertly produced material to be judged at all favourably when compared to these well-documented unrealistic standards. Roepke echoes those from above to claim that "domestic filming" has been customarily "synonymous with unplanned and spontaneous shooting […] without reference to established conventions" (2013 p. 85). Rather than seek to replicate these unattainable aesthetics, then, the films Roepke analyses effectively create their own stylistic forms and conventions which mark a drastic departure from professional film language. This supports Fox's eventual acknowledgement that in the face of such challenges "amateur media production is rendered private, frivolous, and inconsequential" (2004 p. 8).

Such a negatively damning misconception of amateur production raises the question of why it is the focus of extensive study. This matter is explicitly referenced by a wide range of scholars who argue that amateur filmmaking, indeed, amateur media production in general, is so much more than just a "frivolous" endeavour. In asking what value this material holds I return to Zimmermann's assertion that amateur film "provides a vital access point for academic historiography" (2008 p. 1). The content produced by amateurs is said to "open up a series of questions" concerning the intertwining of "film history and social history" (Zimmermann, 2008 p. 2). Surviving audiovisual records made within a diverse range of communities therefore reveal to us a new take on history, allowing the dominant narrative to be challenged by unveiling new perspectives. Consequently, these films can act as significant audiovisual records of history. Richard Fung (2008) investigates the worth of personal home movies, recounting how his own collection led him "to question the selectiveness of both my own memory and the camera's version of my childhood" (2008 p. 29). Liz Czach (2014) correspondingly chronicles how the importance of these personal mementos extends beyond the personal sphere onto a national level. Czach proposes that amateur films are in fact "an important part of a country's visual heritage" both because of the raw footage they capture and the filmmaking evolutions and techniques they may demonstrate (2014 p. 27).

Both personal and national collections can thus act as constant audiovisual records of the past – illuminating a multitude of differing, valuable outlooks – in the face of degrading memory, intentional misremembrance, and attempts to over- or re-write the past. These artefacts constitute "unexplored evidence for film history" which inevitably enable us to "create a more complex, richer explanation of how visual culture operates across many

levels of practice" (Zimmermann, 2008 p. 4). This supports Czach's claim from above as one can witness an evolution in stylistic and aesthetic practices as technological developments occurred within the domestic filmmaking scene. As undeniably valuable as these films are for offering alternative historical perspectives, Heather Norris Nicholson (2014) cautions that the "subjective narratives" of these films "should be read with care" because "[t]heir visual detail remains partial, incomplete, and inscribed with the perspectives of their maker" (2014 p. 73).

As well as the "problem" of subjectivity these films are also affected by the techniques and tools available to the filmmakers at the time of production – noted earlier as frequently substandard, this gap is increasingly becoming smaller. As such, it is necessary to remember that these amateur films, regardless of genre, style, or subject, are predominantly made without financial interests in mind. For Iván Trujillo (2008), amateur cinema is by its very definition created "without an interest in profit" and "produced by technicians and actors who are not financially compensated" (2008 p. 57). Furthermore, Trujillo posits that "[t]he basic purpose of these productions is to share a fun and enjoyable activity" (ibid). Nevertheless, there are notable exceptions of non-professional films which do enable their creators to eventually break into mainstream cinema – albeit a very rare occurrence, with some examples included later in this chapter. There are others, too, which generate some financial reward for their creators via remuneration schemes and pay-to-access platforms, once more suggesting that the divide between amateur and professional is becoming destabilised. Ultimately, Trujillo's claims echo Robert Stebbins's (1982) much earlier description of casual leisure which he defined as "too fleeting, mundane, and commonplace for most people to find a distinctive identity in it" (1982 p. 258). Stebbins thus hints at varying levels of engagement, or "seriousness", within amateur filmmaking which is again reflected in the variety of case studies in the final section of this chapter.

4.3 – Democratisation and the Digital Turn: The Field of Power Reimagined?

> ***The apparent democratization of media is, of course, not without its concerns and limitations; but by placing the producer/consumer (or "prosumer") at the centre of contemporary audiovisual communication, there is potential for long-established power structures and ideological hierarchies to be subverted or, at the very least, questioned***
>
> (Rascaroli, Young, and Monahan, 2014 p. 2)

Having earlier described amateur fan production as "basic human nature" Jenkins has elsewhere insisted that "[f]ans have always been early adopters of new media technologies" (2006 p. 135), whose labour finds its origins "in practices that have occurred just below the radar of the media industry throughout the twentieth century" (2006 p. 137). The chapter now turns to explore how the development of new digital infrastructure, platforms, technologies, and related practices has made these amateur artefacts much more visible

and accessible. In doing so it investigates how this once “hidden layer of cultural activity” has been “pushed into the foreground” – directly onto the radar of the media industry – and subsequently forced media conglomerates to “confront its implications for their commercial interests” (ibid). As such, it directly addresses Lucas’s proclamation that the power is with the people now, and what challenges this poses for the industry.

Fandom and fan spaces offer us a useful entry point to engage with the proliferation of amateur media production. Discussing the impact of this for the media industry, expressly the questions about authorship and ownership it raises, Jenkins explains how

> [w]hat’s shifted is not that people want to tell stories about heroes. What’s shifted is that we now have corporations who believe they own those heroes lock, stock and barrel, and prevent anyone else from telling their stories. So fandom is a place where people who care deeply about these characters can go to participate in that story (quoted in Borland, 2005).

With the concurrent shift in visibility of this unsanctioned fan content, and fan culture in general, Jenkins’s later assertion that Hollywood has traditionally been “deeply suspicious” of such behaviour seems logical; for Jenkins, the industry is of the mindset that “[i]f we don’t control this it’s bad for us” (ibid). Revisiting this theme in a subsequent publication Jenkins further maintains that “[a]s fan productivity goes public, it can no longer be ignored by the media industries, but it cannot be fully contained by them either” (2006 p. 138). Ironically, this is *exactly* what George Lucas and Lucasfilm strived to do when faced with the creation and distribution of unofficial *Star Wars* material which, they claimed, threatened to infringe on their intellectual property.

Rebecca Tushnett (2017) is similarly interested in the ramifications of amateur appropriation and the reworking of copyrighted media. In her analysis of fan texts, moral rights, and copyright law, Tushnet claims that such fan material is ““transformative”” for the way it can “add new insights or meaning to the original work, often in ways that copyright owners don’t like” (2017 p. 78), hence justifying the suspicion of the media industry alluded to above. Additionally, Tushnet later suggests that transforming – indeed, re-authoring – the original text in such a way “means that the original author did not have full control over the original text – that the text was not received in just the way he wanted it to be received” (2017 p. 87). Invoking Roland Barthes’s (1977) formulations on the role of the author – whereby “[t]o give a text an Author is to impose a limit on that text” (quoted in Caughie, 1981 p. 212) – Tushnet promotes the school of thought that once a text has been released it is open to various ways of interpretation. As the examples studied in the final section demonstrate, the arrival of new media platforms and technologies has been imperative in further-deconstructing the spectre of the singular “Author” by enabling a plurality of “prosumers” to rise in its stead (see Friedlander, 2008).

This idea of what might be considered “deviant” or “incorrect” misappropriation and re-presentation signifies what has elsewhere been identified as fans exercising their “right of

free play" with the material available to them (Jenkins, 2013 p. 31). Re-authoring a text contrary to the intentions of the producer has been argued by some as making the original more valuable as this imbues it with alternative, perhaps more personally symbolic, meaning. Matt Hills (2002), for example, proposes that the transformative appropriation of a text fundamentally constitutes

> an act of 'final consumption' which pulls this text away from (intersubjective and public) exchange-value and towards (private, personal) use-value, but without ever cleanly or clearly being able to separate out the two. It is for this reason that fan 'appropriations' of texts or 'resistances' to consumption can always be reclaimed as new instances of exchange-value (2002 p. 35).

It seems plausible, then, that the new "(private, personal) use-value" generated as a result of unsanctioned textual (mis)appropriations cannot be tolerated by the copyright holder(s) as they cannot profit from them. This core focus underpins a review from Jenkins, Sam Ford, and Joshua Green (2018) which scrutinises the various ways in which value is attributed to media in contemporary society, both from a traditional top-down and increasingly bottom-up perspective. The trio ultimately conclude that the media industry remains veritably ill-equipped "to embrace the value generated through audiovisual quotes or other forms of transformative work as a means of incorporating their material into larger, ongoing conversations" (2018 p. 188). The consumption – or, alternatively, transformative appropriation – of a text in this manner engenders what Hills describes as a "moral battle" between producers and consumers (2002 p. 32). With fans allegedly being "early adopters of new media technologies" I will now shift focus to consider this relationship in more detail before returning to explore the moral battle between Lucasfilm and *Star Wars* fans.

As chronicled in the previous chapter George Lucas, in his role as "total filmmaker", maintained a fondness for editing throughout his career, calling it his "first love" (quoted in Kline, 199 p. 166). This passion resulted in an ultimately unsuccessful endeavour to revolutionise post-production by creating a pioneering, non-linear digital editing system in the 1980s. A corresponding fate was met by the main competitors to his EditDroid. The Montage Picture Processor, for example, debuted at the same National Association of Broadcasters (NAB) conference in 1984 but, despite initially appearing "far more successful" than Lucas's venture, the business faced financial difficulties and any success was short-lived (Rubin, 2006 p. 455). Avid, on the other hand, went from strength to strength: their Avid/1 prototype was introduced in 1988 as one of "the first all-digital video editing systems" (Rubin, 2006 p. 468). Conceding defeat in the face of more effective alternatives this marked the end of Lucas's attempts to transform the editing process. He subsequently sold the Droid technology to Avid in 1994 who then went on to exhibit their hybrid AvidDroid at the NAB trade show the following year (Rubin, 2006 pp. 469 – 470). For James Monaco (2009) it would be Avid, not Lucas, who was responsible for having "revolutioniz[ed] the art of editing" throughout the 1980s and 1990s, an exciting period of technological innovation during which

“computer-based editing [increasingly] dominated” the “tedious” and “time-consuming art” of film editing (2009 p. 144) – something they continue to do today with Media Composer, “the media and entertainment industry’s most used video editing software” (Avid, 2019).

As filmmaking tools have improved in the intervening decades driven by unabated technological advancements, contemporary editing platforms and software continue to demystify the process by making it much easier and intuitive than before. Identified in Chapter 2 as a consequence of technical continuation, Fox instead likens this to a process of ““technological leapfrogging”” whereby

> picture *and sound* editing has now not only been introduced into the home, but in a digital computer-based, nonlinear fashion, which reduces the difference between present amateur and professional editing platforms largely to a matter of drive space (2004 p. 13).

Contemporary commercially-available editing software like Adobe Premiere Pro, Apple’s Final Cut Pro, and, indeed, Avid Media Composer – as well as similar freeware alternatives obtainable via auxiliary sources – is today instantly available for download upon purchase. Clearly, this is thanks to the sustained development of internet infrastructure and the switch to digital broadband permitting high-speed connectivity and superfast downloads, all ensuing from the wider digital turn. This has also become gradually more affordable and ubiquitous in recent years, especially so since the “transition of fandom to the Internet […] during the early 1990s” (Busse and Hellekson, 2006 p. 13).

Relatedly, Francesca Coppa (2006) has described this as a period of “modernism for online fandom” (2006 p. 54). At the same time it also constitutes the latest twist in the long-running and oft-fractious dialogue between amateur producers and corporate echelons within the media industry. Until this point the sharing of amateur content inspired by protected IP – amateur films, fan fiction, and fanzines – was consigned to the clandestine distribution of physical media via amateur conventions, festivals, and underground networks. This largely unseen behaviour was relatively easy to police, with the threat of cease-and-desist persecution enough to deter the open sharing of such material. However, the proliferation of file sharing, piracy, and the widespread dissemination of content online via forums and message-boards represented a new challenge for media conglomerates keen to curb copyright infringement. Moreover, as the media industry came to terms with changes in the way content was being made, the rise of peer-to-peer (P2P) networks and illegal downloads forced them to reconsider its consumption and potentially unsanctioned re-use, either via unauthorised exhibition or transformative appropriation.

The struggle of media companies in adapting to the “subversion” of their hierarchical power structures, alluded to above by Rascaroli and others as a result of these technological developments, is clearly demonstrated in the ongoing saga between Lucasfilm and *Star Wars* fans using the series as their creative muse. Notably, this creativity surged following

the release of *The Empire Strikes Back* (1980) and continued to grow after Lucas's aforementioned decision to retire the series in 1983 after *Return of the Jedi*. The ensuing hiatus resulted in a paucity of official *Star Wars* texts and filmic instalments, something relatively unique to a franchise which has existed in public consciousness for over 40 years. As suggested by Will Brooker (2002), this extended interval thus allowed, perhaps even encouraged, fan prosumers "to become curators of the mythos, to keep it alive, to cherish it, and to sustain it both through their financial investment […] and in some cases by participating in folk activity like fan fiction or amateur digital cinema" (2002 p. 88).

The initial moral battle over *Star Wars* finds its roots in the power struggle over the creation and publication of slash fiction, a sub-genre of fan fiction which "explores same-sex relationships between the characters" (Brooker, 2002 p. 129). Given its salacious nature slash fiction has been notoriously controversial in the discourse between its writers and Lucasfilm: fans actively seeking to exercise their right of free play via transformative appropriation against copyright-holding producers eager to protect the material they legally own. It is beyond the scope of this chapter to examine slash fiction in detail; more in-depth accounts exist elsewhere (Brooker, 2002; Hellekson and Busse, 2006; Jenkins, 2013). Of significance here is the fact that such deviant material exists at all. Like the fan films and fan edits discussed in the following section, the (mis)appropriation of content in such a niche manner raises a number of legal and moral questions, particularly the balance between respecting an artist's moral rights and a fan's right to play freely with material released to them.

As may be expected, Lucasfilm took what has been described as a "particularly hard line" against publishers and fanzines featuring *Star Wars* slash fiction (Brooker, 2002 p. 165), claiming that those responsible had "violated the family values" associated with their brand" (Jenkins, 2013 p. 31). The organisation released a pair of letters to fanzine editors in 1981 openly criticising the spread of slash fiction in their publications. Asserting their status as copyright holder, Lucasfilm first warned against the further use of their IP in such a manner:

> Lucasfilm Ltd. does own <u>all</u> rights to STAR WARS characters and we are going to insist upon <u>no</u> pornography. This may mean no fanzines if that measure is what is necessary to stop the few from darkening the reputation our company is so proud of. For now, the few who ignore the limits of good taste have been turned over to our legal department for legal action (Garrett, 1981a; original underscore).

Unsurprisingly, this initially reads like a corporate attempt to prevent reputational damage-by-association with the slash material. Lucasfilm is seeking to warn off any further potential "darkening" of their reputation and the *Star Wars* brand by threatening legal countermeasures against those found culpable. A follow-up communiqué was circulated to fanzines later that year informing recipients that they would no longer receive official material from Lucasfilm, and would therefore be excluded from subsequent promotional campaigns,

due to their continued publication of slash texts. The company took this as a further opportunity to remind those concerned of their lawful status, and once more issue the threat of legal action:

> Lucasfilm does not produce any X-rated STAR WARS episodes, so why would we be placed in a light where people think we do? […] we can and will take action, starting today, against any and all publications that ignore good taste and violate this reasonable cease and desist letter. Nothing can stop anyone from writing anything they like about the STAR WARS characters, but those characters are owned and controlled by Lucasfilm Ltd. and George Lucas. You don't own these characters and can't publish anything about them without permission. The word has come down from George Lucas himself (Garrett, 1981b; original underscore).

To borrow Lucas's own terminology: Garret is yet again reaffirming Lucasfilm's status as copyright holder in an attempt to prevent the obscene, "X-rated" misappropriation of brand-related characters.

Citing the protection of the "family values" associated with the series the corporation is, in effect, seeking to control the publication of material in unofficial fanzines. The use of punctuation to emphasise key terms, like their ownership of "all rights" and the fact that writers "can't publish anything" without sanction, is assertive and seeks to reinforce the traditional relational hierarchy between Lucasfilm as sole producer and a homogenous mass of passive fan-consumers. Some scholars have argued that their actions reveal an inner suspicion of unofficial fan material as being antagonistic "rivals to their officially sponsored and corporately run fan organization[s]" (Jenkins, 2013 p. 30). It must be noted, too, that this was 1981; long before the widespread adoption of the internet and online fan communities, suggesting that such behaviour might have been easier to suppress.

The reaction to these letters was overwhelmingly negative. Some notable responses, including those of Catherine Siebert (1982) and Barbara Tennison (1991), raise widely-held anxieties about Lucasfilm's suppression of fan activity. The former was an editor of slash fiction fanzine SLAYSU which was targeted by the Lucasfilm cease and desist campaign. Siebert advocated for the fans' right to free play, which was being robustly curtailed by this persecution, and accused them of saying "[t]his is what we see in the *Star Wars* films and we are telling you that is what you will see" (quoted in Jenkins, 2013 p. 31). For Siebert, Lucasfilm were undermining the enterprise of fans associated with inventive and imaginative, albeit X-rated, endeavours. Clearly the company used its dominant position to stifle fan creativity and ensure those responsible effectively remained marginalised and oppressed within the same field. Likewise Tennison, an author of slash fiction, also disapproves of their authoritarian approach and disagrees with "the concept that property rights over fiction […] include any rights of the author/producer to determine *how* readers or viewers understand the offering" (quoted in Jenkins, 2013 p. 32; original italics). Their replies echo Tushnet's message about the value of transformative appropriation, advocating that

fans should be free from harassment in the creation of new meaning in their uniquely divergent works.

Besides acting as particularly vocal representatives for a large number of like-minded individuals within and beyond *Star Wars* fandom, Siebert and Tennison both unequivocally attest to Cornell Sandvoss's (2005) "model of fandom as a form of narcissistic self-reflection […] between the fan and his or her object of fandom" (2005 p. 98). Indeed, this is symptomatic of an overarching movement seeking to protect the right to free play across amateur fan production. Sandvoss bases this model on his hypothesis that the "appropriation of their object of fandom" is what forms the "symbolic and ideological core" around which fan communities gather and bond in a shared veneration of the chosen text (2005 p. 57). Consequently, this leads to the development of an "intense emotional bond between fans and their objects of fandom" as the objects become "intrinsically interwoven" with the fans' "sense of self" (2005 pp. 95 – 96). In the case of *Star Wars*, this was in no doubt aided by the previously aforementioned gap between filmic instalments – as well as in-universe biographical and narrative blanks which fans sought to fill – which allowed this "narcissism" to manifest itself in the form of third-party prosumer activity.

As early adopters of new technology, many of those ostracised for their involvement with unofficial blacklisted fanzines published during the 1980s began to – as suggested above by Busse and Hellekson – "transition" their work online at the beginning of the following decade. This meant that any proposed oversight of unsanctioned fan material by media companies like Lucasfilm became much more difficult: internet users now had a level of anonymity and a wider, cheaper distribution outlet for their work which became instantly available to globally disseminate and download. A pivotal turning point in the relationship between producers and consumers, Lincoln Geraghty (2015) has argued that

> [i]n these web spaces, personal memories and official histories of global media franchises are constantly negotiated and reshaped, taking on new meanings. These negotiations impact on the construction of a fan identity and the production of culturally important paratexts that require scholarly attention in their own right (2015 p 5).

Lucasfilm's struggle to adapt and maintain control in the face of the possibilities presented by online platforms, for instance unofficial fan-generated websites, is demonstrated in the following example.

Like those involved in the moral battle over slash fiction, Jason Raspuni found his website targeted in a similar manner. Raspuini alleges that he was "nicely asked […] to shut it down, with the implication that if I didn't [,] they would bring in a lawyer or something" (quoted in Fuchs and Philips, 2016 p. 213). In response, Lucasfilm issued a statement in May 1994 seeking to counter any unwanted negative publicity. The missive assured fans that the organisation was not "shutting down Jason's website" and apologised for "any confusion that may have emerged" (quoted in Fuchs and Philips, 2016 pp. 213 – 214). Appearing some

13 years after Garrett's letters, the statement contains a paragraph in which Lucasfilm openly admit the challenges they face as copyright holders in the internet age, emblematic of the media industry's wider struggles to adapt:

> As you can understand, it is important […] for Lucasfilm to protect *Star Wars* copyrights and trademarks. Since the internet is growing so fast, we are in the process of developing guidelines for how we can enhance the ability of *Star Wars* fans to communicate with each other without inferring on our *Star Wars* copyrights and trademarks and we hope to make these guidelines available in the near future (quoted in Fuchs and Philips, 2016 p. 214).

Once more, Lucasfilm encourages fans to respect their status as copyright holder, with an altogether more corporate, business-like approach than that taken by Garrett. This change in stance is overtly reflected in their discussion of "developing guidelines" which will, supposedly, "enhance the ability of *Star Wars* fans" to enjoy the brand. The irony here stems from the fact that the introduction of instructions aimed at permitting the enhanced enjoyment of something seems counter-intuitive and sterile. Instead, it seems more reasonable to recognise this as an effort to apply their old methods of corporate control and oversight in a new context; one in which the company is seeking to reaffirm traditional power hierarchies at a time when these structures began to come under increasing scrutiny in a gradually evolving media landscape.

In a seemingly benevolent move, Lucasfilm subsequently provided fans with their own web space within the *Star Wars* website. This would supply fans with a sanctioned home online, bearing the official Lucasfilm seal of approval, where they could interact with each other, share fan-made content, and bond in a unifying enjoyment of the series. As users later discovered, however, the terms and conditions for using the site included a clause revealing the organisation's underlying motives: "you hereby grant to us [Lucasfilm] the right to exercise all intellectual property rights, in any media now known or not currently known, with respect to any content you place on your Homestead-powered website" (quoted in Brooker, 2002 p. 169). Any material hosted on the site, regardless of submission date, would thus belong to the company. With the impending proliferation of fan-made *Star Wars* content potentially "inferring" on legal copyrights it has been noted that Lucasfilm had "cleverly shifted from repression to containment" (ibid). So, while the fans were doubtless encouraged to express their right of free play, they were only authorised to do so within the terms imposed upon them. Like Siebert and Tennison before her, Elizabeth Durack (n.d.) summarised the profusely unfavourable fan reaction to this caveat while championing the need for unrestrained free play:

> Legally, it's theirs […]. But emotionally we feel we have a right to participate in the story […]. George Lucas will always have sole financial rights to profit from his *Star Wars*. But what of other people's *Star Wars*-es? What of the tens of thousands of pieces of *Star Wars* fanfic which constitute auxiliary myths to complement George's central one? I believe that, in all fairness, they should

> have the right to share their "product" with the world – yes, even if it competes with George's (quoted in Brooker, 2002 p. 170).

When Lucasfilm appointed AtomFilms.com as the "official [online] host for *Star Wars* fan films" in the year 2000 fan creativity was once again facilitated – even encouraged in the form of "periodic contests to recognize outstanding amateur accomplishments" – but remained prohibited by their terms of use (Jenkins, 2006 pp. 158 – 159). While the website would supply fans with "a library of official effects" free of charge, those using the material had to "agree to certain constraints on content" (ibid). As a result, the aesthetic of films deemed permissible was strongly regulated. According to a report cited by Brooker

> only "documentaries and parodies" are endorsed […]. "No attempts to expand on the *Star Wars* universe will be accepted, ensuring that George Lucas and the company he founded remain the only sources for canonical information about *Star Wars* and its characters" (2002 pp. 177 – 178).

The same regulations remained in place for the Official Fan Film Awards, organised in their partnership with AtomFilms. Jenkins claims that these guidelines have otherwise been interpreted by fans as "restrictions" in an overt effort to curb the content of their films (quoted in Borland, 2005). Creatively, these inhibitive statutes firstly ensured that filmmakers could "only use the sounds" they were officially provided with, directors were prevented from using "copyrighted materials and appropriat[ing] or recontextualiz[ing]" what they did choose to use, and finally only allowed them to "do parodies" but forbade "dramatic expansions of the "Star Wars" universe" (ibid). Philosophically, these edicts ensured that Lucasfilm retained hierarchical control over the use of their IP in digital formats online. Practically, they ensured that entrants were forced to accept limitations on their creative expression.

This legislation frustrated those amateur fan filmmakers by severely limiting the artistic scope of their work. However, as the earlier accounts from those involved with slash fiction show, this can be seen as the source of greater discontent for fan fiction authors who were never afforded such creative freedom – only to be compounded by the arrival of the sanctioned fan film awards. It would appear, then, that while Lucas's "rhetoric about the potentials of digital filmmaking […] captured the imagination of amateur filmmakers", amateurs who were effectively "taking on the master on his own ground" (Jenkins, 2006 p. 148), it is evident that he, as an artist, "wants to be "celebrated" but not appropriated […]. Lucas has opened up a space for fans to create and share what they create with others but *only on his terms* (Jenkins, 2006 p. 154; my italics).

The extent to which Lucasfilm's attempts to stem the flow of amateur *Star Wars* material online were successful is debatable. The challenge posed by video sharing platforms, which appear to be relatively ethically sound due to their continued commerciality and ubiquity, nonetheless remains, particularly in regards to the content of the videos they host. Websites founded shortly after the turn of the millennium such as Dailymotion, Vimeo,

and YouTube have indeed opened up new digital avenues for audience members to explore online. As an example illustrating the changing dynamic of the producer-consumer relationship, YouTube represents a veritably compelling subject of study due to its status as a well-known site of the ongoing moral battle between the parties. Launched in 2005, around the same time as its contemporaries identified above, YouTube is of notable interest because it has successfully adapted to change within the media industry, transcending desktop web-browsers to grow its brand and become a convincing market leader (Statista, 2019a). For instance, although Dailymotion and Vimeo also have mobile apps, YouTube comes pre-installed on many devices including smartphones, tablets, and, increasingly, smart televisions. Its omnipresence on mobile appliances has been key to the continued expansion of the platform; the company reports that almost three-quarters of views are made on such devices (YouTube, 2019b). As noted in Chapter 2 this is indicative of wider behavioural changes and how consumers are now accessing their media.

The growth of YouTube is comparable to that of another media company which has similarly benefited from the digital turn. Netflix was founded eight years previously and has traditionally found itself at the leading-edge of content delivery, choosing to operate on a subscriber-only model and focus solely on the DVD format unlike its competitors (McDonald and Smith-Rowsey, 2016 p. 1), before later spearheading the online streaming market in the new millennium. Consequently, the organisation has grown to become a “thorn in the side of existing media industries” largely due to its hugely prosperous expansion in the years since (McDonald and Smith-Rowsey, 2016 p. 3). As noted by Sam Ward (2016), the inclusion of the Netflix app on a plethora of devices has “made it possible for Netflix to be presented as a mark of added value rather than yet another alternative in the increasingly numerous options on offer” (2016 p. 230). Mirroring YouTube, the maturation of Netflix is predominantly due to its availability as a mobile application; there are now 139 million global subscribers (Fiegerman, 2019), a meteoric uptake eclipsing the 22.93 million reported following its launch in 2011 (Statista, 2019b). YouTube, then, appears to have historically been considered the video-sharing platform of choice given its spread and promotion as a “mark of added value” in the same manner as Netflix. However, it remains to be seen how long their dominance within the market will persist in the face of emerging alternative services and ever-changing patterns of consumption.

With its status as the “fastest-growing site in the history of the web” (Snickars and Vonderau, 2009 p. 10) and subsequent anointment as the “default online moving-image archive” (Prelinger, 2009 p. 269), YouTube has generated a wide range of scholarly material analysing its evolutionary role in society. Jean Burgess and Joshua Green (2009), for example, identify a duality in the platform, claiming that YouTube “proves that in practice the economic and cultural rearrangements that ‘participatory culture’ stands for are as disruptive and uncomfortable as they might be potentially liberating” (2009 p. 10). While it undeniably gives independent filmmakers the means to distribute their content online, it is the

“disruptive” impact attributed to YouTube – and other new media technologies – which has spawned a suspicion on the part of established media companies. Furthermore, the potential “liberation” associated with YouTube, its competitors, and the technology enabling their use might not match expectations held of them. This is supported by Zizi Papacharissi (2010) who reminds us that “[n]ot all technologies are democratizing or democracy-related. Most technology has little to do with the condition of democracy. Yet, technologies that afford expressive capabilities […] tend to trigger narratives of emancipation, autonomy, and freedom in public imagination” (2010 p. 3). This would indicate that the diffusion of technology and platforms allowing everyday people to create and distribute their own material is not as “emancipatory” as was perhaps envisaged.

Indeed, referring back to Bourdieu, it might be more accurate to understand this democratisation as being contingent upon the forces surrounding it. This is clear from the instances involving slash fiction cited earlier, and even goes back to the early days of amateur filmmaking. While contemporary sites like YouTube and WordPress allow enthusiastic filmmakers or writers to share their efforts online, they still face the rigours of digital hierarchies and the possibility of legal action if their work infringes on legally protected IP. It is also important to remember that, while technology does become increasingly affordable, intuitive, and usable, this practice nevertheless remains the pursuit of those fortunate enough to have the financial stability, time, and technical competency to do engage with it. Rather than wholly “emancipating” the entire population, Papacharissi proposes that this new technology instead “presents a way to counter powerlessness by allowing individuals to propose new spaces, upon which newer, more empowering habits and relations may be cultivated” (2010 p. 15). This leads to her later postulation that

> [w]hile it is important to understand the opportunities that convergent technologies afford us, it is also necessary to remind ourselves that several of the socio-cultural shifts associated with technology are variably experienced by populations, depending on historical and geographic context (2010 p. 74).

Put differently: while YouTube and its ilk allow a broader range of individual voices to be heard, the difficulty is enabling these historically marginalised communities to access the technology and develop their proficiency to be able to use it adroitly in the first place. As recognised from the earlier discussion about home movies, this also extends to the preservation of said voices, which remains a contemporary problem due to technological obsolescence as a result of sustained evolution.

Burgess and Green likewise point to the unique structure of YouTube in order to claim that it presents users with the chance to

> confront some of participatory culture’s most pressing problems: the unevenness of participation and voice; the apparent tensions between commercial interests and the public good; and the contestation of ethics and

> social norms that occurs as belief systems, interests, and cultural differences collide (2009 p. viii).

At the same time, it is the description of YouTube as a "*potential* site of cosmopolitan cultural citizenship" (Burgess and Green, 2009 p. 81; my italics) which reflects its questionable depiction as a utopian service – obstacles remain. Much like those experienced by the pioneers of amateur filmmaking at the beginning of the twentieth century, these difficulties are predominantly associated with accessibility, affordability, agency, and technical literacy:

> access to all the layers of possible participation is limited to a particular segment of the population – those with the motivations, technological competencies, and site-specific cultural capital sufficient to participate at all levels of engagement the network affords (ibid).

Eggo Müller (2009) is similalrly pragmatic when discussing the *potential* benefits of YouTube. Like Papacharissi, he notes that it initially "provoked visions of a total democratization of the audiovisual space" and, echoing Coppola, promised such a space "where there are no more barriers between producers and the audience, or between professionals and amateurs" (2009 p. 126). Despite an apparent removal of barriers separating these once clearly delineated groups, the question of technical literacy still remains; can "amateurs" fully exploit the tools at their disposal?

Müller explores this in relation to the quality of amateur-produced content, resulting in his so-called "participation dilemma" (2009 p. 127). While critics, for Müller, seemingly "embrace new possibilities of participation" brought about by this new-found democratisation, there is what he calls a concurrent "problem" with the emergence of these "new, "uneducated" participants [who] neglect professional standards of craftsmanship" (ibid). Referring back to Stebbins, this may be explained by their supposed engagement with filmmaking as nothing more than a casual hobby. However, it seems more likely that the substandard quality of this material stems from the unattainable professional standards identified earlier by Fox. Hence Müller's dilemma:

> new participants have to achieve some skills that enable them to contribute to online cultures in meaningful ways, but whenever a cultural elite starts to train and thus to "professionalize" [sic] new "ordinary" users, those traditional cultural barriers and hierarchies that have been questioned by the emerging participatory cultures are rebuilt (2009 p. 128).

To a certain extent we therefore end up with a multi-tiered hierarchy of amateurism; one which is clearly set apart from professional filmmaking, but features its own in-built standards, structures, and levels of acceptable amateur-professionalism. As alluded to previously, this has been fortified thanks to the remuneration schemes used on sites like YouTube which affords amateur-professionals a new standard by which their work can be judged – as well as setting them apart from casual amateur filmmakers. Moreover,

depending on their level of financial compensation, this can also allow the amateur-professional to access better equipment and achieve higher-quality results in their films. While this may not be, as suggested by Fox, the achievement of a Hollywood-level aesthetic, it would be enough to introduce a multiplicity of standards within the fractured amateur hierarchy.

By combining Müller's participation dilemma and Bourdieu's visualisation of field relations, it would be plausible to suggest that we now see the replication of fields-within-fields: that is, sub-fields increasingly influenced by the larger parent ones which offer the illusion of autonomous independence. One must also recognise that the democratising potential of digital platforms and technology is not constrained solely to amateurs. Established professionals already working in the industry, perhaps seeking more oversight and control of creative projects, can also avail of such tools and outlets. Not only does this serve to reinforce earlier concerns about content, the divide between amateurs and professionals, and the producer-consumer relationship, it further blurs the boundaries between hierarchies and fundamentally questions our definitions of what it means to be an amateur or a professional.

Patrick Vonderau (2009) acknowledges this and uses the 2007 – 2008 Writers Guild of America (WGA) strike as a relevant case study. Vonderau cites an interview with professional filmmaker Doug Liman to engage with the theme that "YouTube not only offered evidence of innovative formats and potential revenue streams, it also presented new role models for media workers" (2009 p. 110). Indeed, for Vonderau, the "successful convergence of executive and creative authority" promised by YouTube was "heralded as a prospect for writers" striking during the disputes as an alternative means to facilitate their creative agency (ibid). Accordingly, Liman asserts that "[i]f the last strike is best remembered for the studios attempting to show they could create programming without writers, this could be the strike where the writers show they can do it without the studios" (quoted in DiOrio, 2008). Being able to create and distribute content without the backing of studios is arguably another reason behind the industry's suspicion towards such platforms; amateur production represents one thing, but the online migration of talent from studios is something entirely different. Liman points to the growth in the number of channels and alternative media outlets as a "moment of opportunity" in the pursuit of creating and disseminating "compelling programming" to audiences (ibid).

Once again, the proliferation of online platforms and technology enabling both amateurs *and* professionals to produce and distribute content without the needs of a studio intermediary clearly fuels industry-wide fear and leaves them feeling threatened further. Importantly, however, the Jackson Bites production house Liman discusses fails to explicitly reference amateur creators. While he describes how the company will "afford writers the opportunity to create content that will be seen and enjoyed by audiences without the involvement of television networks" (ibid), this likely infers that those writers will have an

established reputation in the industry. In terms of field relations this suggests, yet again, that those with enough capital may be among the first to benefit from new advances and shifts. It also causes one to question further what it means to be professional and how professionalism is judged; will the work of these writers, created outside of the industry within which they maintain professional status, still be considered to be of professional standard without the backing of well-known and long-established production companies? This will be explored in more detail in the following section which analyses a number of independently-made films, all demonstrating the continually shifting boundaries of what is possible with increasingly more affordable, innovative, and usable filmmaking tools.

4.4 – Attack of the Clones: Homage, Parody, and the Pastiche of Copyrighted Material

> ***The thing about […] "Star Wars" fans is they're very independent-thinking people. They all think outside the box, but they all have very strong ideas about what should happen, and they think they should have it their way. Which is fine, except I'm making the movies, so I should have it my way***
>
> George Lucas (quoted in Associated Press, 2004)

Lucas's magnanimous generalisation of *Star Wars* enthusiasts above can be equally applicable to fans of other franchises. This is demonstrated, for instance, on the renowned fan edit website www.fanedit.org which lists over 1,200 fan films inspired by several notable franchises, including *Harry Potter* (2001 – 2011), *The Hobbit* (2012 – 2014), *Pirates of the Caribbean* (2003 – present), and *Star Trek* (1966 – present). These are classified in a variety of categories: documentaries, extended editions, short films, and so-called "special projects" which digitally enhance, remove, or restore material in the subject film – much like Lucas's own *Star Wars Trilogy: Special Edition* (1997). Furthermore, his above proclamation also recognises one of the driving motivations behind fans' desires to make their own films. Fans exhibit a self-involved belief, informed by their uniquely individual "strong ideas about what should happen", that they could and should "have it their way" – hence the ensuing moral battle between fan-producers, who feel that they can do better, and copyright holders eager to have their IP from potential infringement. The narcissism is therefore evidenced in the results of their fan creativity in whatever form this takes.

Based on the films hosted on the site, it could be argued that the high fantasy/science fiction settings of many of these franchises provides fans a broader canvas within the chosen fictional universe to exercise their right of free play. As the following examples show, the real-world setting and historical context of a series like *Indiana Jones* (1981 – present) would seem to inhibit creativity in a way that the galaxy far, far away of *Star Wars* inherently promotes; the faux-reality setting of the early-to-mid twentieth century does not have the same appeal as an expansive, unexplored galaxy with seemingly endless possibilities. An explanation for this is proposed by Kurt Lancaster and Tom Mikotowicz

(2001), who claim that the imaginary worlds depicted in science fiction and fantasy provide fans with the opportunity to “transcend their mundane everyday lives and experience firsthand the fantasies with which they are intimately familiar” (2001 p. 1), hence their popularity. While *Star Trek* and *Star Wars* dominate the science fiction categories, the fantasy genre is predominantly influenced by the world of “Middle Earth” first introduced by J. R. R. Tolkien in *The Hobbit, or There and Back Again* (1937).

Following the unprecedented cultural impact of *Star Wars* it is perhaps unsurprising to learn that there exists a vast quantity of homemade films unofficially inhabiting the same universe. Fanedit.org returns 180 results from its Internet Fanedit Database (IFDB) within a wide range of categories (Fanedit.org, 2019) and an even larger number can be found on video-streaming sites like Dailymotion, Vimeo, and YouTube. Given my focus on Lucas it seems natural to being a comparative discussion of fan films by first looking to those spawned in the wake of his creation. The sheer volume of *Star Wars* fan films makes an exhaustive list both impractical within the scope of the project and risks a reductive divergence with the scope of this chapter, and the thesis as a whole. Consequently, the examples discussed below constitute a relatively small, although distinctive, cross-section, and have been chosen due to their unique status within the corpus.

Directed by Ernie Fosselius, and released the year after the original film made its theatrical debut, *Hardware Wars* (1978) is constructed in the style of a promotional trailer for *Star Wars*. The 13-minute short succeeds in doing so to comedic effect as Fosselius lovingly parodies the film. The trailer pays homage to the traditional 20th Century Fox fanfare by replacing it in favour of the director’s own “20th Century Foss” monument and accompanying musical cue. The director imitates another established convention by including the use of a narrator, renowned voice actor Paul Frees, who imbues the infamous “you’ll laugh, you’ll cry, you’ll kiss three bucks goodbye” tagline with a self-aware air of legitimacy (Taylor, 2016 pp. 163 – 164). Fosselius also takes liberties with character names, replacing them with more humorous, nonsensical alternatives; Luke Skywalker becomes Fluke Starbucker, Obi-Wan Kenobi is renamed Augie Ben Doggie, Han Solo is rechristened Ham Salad, and Princess Leia is retitled Princess Anne-Droid. Visual humour is also creatively employed to parody character appearances. Chewbacca is reimagined as Cookie Monster from *Sesame Street* (1969 – present) – with the newer more apt name of Chewchilla the Wookiee Monster reflecting the character’s in-universe species – while Princess Leia’s iconic hairstyle is replaced with cinnamon buns affixed to Anne-Droid's head in a rudimentary fashion. And in another postmodern intertextual reference Fosselius’s alternative to C-3PO, 4-Q-2, is almost indistinguishable in appearance from Tin Man from Victor Fleming’s *The Wizard of Oz* (1939). Similar sight gags also work to satirise the visual iconography of the film’s vehicles, droid characters, and weaponry: the sleek spaceships of *Star Wars* are replaced with, as the title implies, a number of household tools and appliances including toasters, irons, cassette tapes, and winged corkscrews; R2-D2 from *Star Wars*, here called Artie Deco, is crudely

replaced by a vacuum cleaner; and the series' iconic lightsabers take the form of flashlights as Fosselius demonstrates an impressive ingenuity in his endearing pastiche of *Star Wars*.

Ernie Fosselius's faux-trailer is a pivotal text due to its status as the earliest-recorded *Star Wars* fan film. Clearly constructed as a simple parodic homage the short has subsequently received much commercial and critical acclaim. Indeed, the film is reported to have grossed $500,000 in the first year of its release, earning Fosselius a reported "6,250 percent return" from his original $8,000 budget (Taylor, 2016 pp. 163 – 164). Furthermore, the film won the Pioneer Award at the Official *Star Wars* Fan Film Awards in 2003. For Ryan Shand (2013), recognition at such ceremonies arguably overshadows financial recompense because they play an "especially important" role for "prize-winning filmmakers [who] are unlikely ever to see any financial returns for their efforts, yet still seek confirmation of their work's cultural value" (2013 p. 7). Film festivals rewarding amateur productivity in such a way thus offer a potentially more fulfilling honour: acceptance by peers and like-minded individuals or, in this instance, the official Lucasfilm stamp of approval. Nevertheless, while Trujillo's earlier point that amateur cinema is not aimed at profit, and Fosselius never expected to make much from this endeavour (Young, 2008 pp. 65 – 66), it is impressive to see a project like this generate such success – particularly at a time when accessing the necessary tools would have remained the pursuit of a relatively small social group.

Equally novel in the history of fan films is Eric Zala's *Raiders of the Lost Ark: The Adaptation* (1989). Inspired by another Lucasfilm-owned franchise, with a comparatively lesser impact in terms of fan creativity – Fanedit.org, for example, lists less than 20 – Zala's aptly-titled piece is a feature-length, shot-for-shot remake of Steven Spielberg's *Raiders of the Lost Ark* (1981). Undoubtedly escapist in nature, the characters featured throughout the *Indiana Jones* series are nonetheless grounded in reality and are forced to come to terms with living in the real world. Jones himself cannot use the Force and does not exhibit fantastical powers; he is a simple professor of archaeology who relies on his intuition and quick-thinking – oftentimes supplemented by a healthy supply of coincidence and serendipity on his adventures for fortune and glory. As such, the series does not offer much room for expansion beyond what is established in-canon onscreen, and this likely explains both the lack of fan films featuring him and the "realistic" nature of the content found in those which do exist. For Chris Strompolos, one of Zala's collaborators who played the titular adventurer, this realism acts as an inspiration rather than an inhibition:

> [Indiana Jones] was the type of hero in the screen that felt very real […]. Very human, flawed, self-reliant, sharp, kinda macho, a man of few words and definitely a man of action. And I think for a boy growing up looking for a male role-model to emulate, he just blew me away. I wanted nothing more than to inhabit that world (quoted in Young, 2008 p. 99).

Rather than attempt to overrule or feel restricted by the sense of realism, then, it seems instead that the project fully embraced this aspect of the series and kept it at the core of the

production. While the film would take seven years to complete (ibid) the patience of its creators was well-rewarded as their work received much critical and public acclaim in intervening years, including Spielberg's own glowing response (Young, 2008 pp. 112 – 121).

As the technology available to amateur filmmakers continued to rapidly improve, becoming both more affordable and increasingly user-friendly, the 1990s would see the sustained democratisation and demystification of film production – particularly the editing process. Significantly, *StarLego* (1990) has been identified as the "first fan film edited on a home computer, years before the software to do such a thing was available to consumers" (Young, 2008 p. 122). Its creators Myles Abbott and Kevin Burfitt were a pair of videogame programmers (ibid) who, in order to realise their vision, were forced to write their own software allowing them to capture frames which were then played back and recorded onto a video deck (Burfitt, 1999).

The short, which recreates a selection of scenes from the original *Star Wars* film in LEGO form, represents the first example of non-professional filmmakers being able to successfully implement desktop-based technology in their work. The editing software developed by Abbott and Burfitt enabled them to do much more than was previously possible with existing technology, allowing them to seamlessly integrate original material from *A New Hope* into their film (ibid). While later examples take the manipulation of film material one step further in the form of fan edits explicitly re-editing and removing content, *StarLego* is nevertheless a unique example of appropriative homage, and the creators are keen to reinforce its non-commercial nature (ibid). Noteworthy too is the fact that the film was made before the release of official LEGO *Star Wars* sets, and even predates Kevin Rubio's acclaimed *Troops* (1997) by seven years. As such, the collaboration between Abbott and Burfitt occupies an important, if often overlooked, position within the history of fan films. This is likely due to the avant-garde nature of its production at the beginning of the "revolutionary" transition from "home movies to home video" which marked the decade (Young, 2008 p. 122).

Troops appeared towards the end of Young's so-called revolutionary transition and displayed the possibilities offered by digital technology and computer-generated effects which had grown increasingly sophisticated in a relatively short time. Indeed, it has been claimed that Rubio's film effectively marked the beginning of a new period of fan-made *Star Wars* films. Capitalising on an established fan base eager to make their own additions to the series given the ongoing paucity of official Lucasfilm-backed entries to the saga, *Troops* has been hailed as the "lightning rod that inspired a new generation" of fan filmmakers (Young, 2008 p. xii). Like Ernie Fosselius before him, Rubio employs the use of intertextual brand merging to reimagine the *Star Wars* universe along the lines of long-running American reality series *COPS* (1989 – present). While Fosselius's film opened with a repurposed 20th Century Fox fanfare, Rubio opts instead to recreate the *COPS* opening sequence, complete with a

Star Wars-themed cover version of Inner Circle's "Bad Boys" (1987) – the original version of which plays during the opening credits of each episode.

The film is stylised as a mockumentary and follows a squadron of Imperial Stormtroopers on their daily business patrolling Tatooine. While *Hardware Wars* features pastiche reinterpretations of its creative genesis, *Troops* includes the appearance of two re-cast characters from the original film; Luke Skywalker's aunt and uncle Beru and Owen Lars, as well as cameos from Boba Fett and a number of scavenger Jawa creatures. The main action of *Troops* centres around a domestic dispute involving the Lars couple which is particularly engaging as it offers an alternative reason behind their demise. In *Star Wars* it is assumed that a band of Stormtroopers killed the pair off-screen as they ruthlessly hunt down Luke. In *Troops*, however, we are presented with a conflicting sequence of events. The so-called Black Sheep Squadron arrives at the Lars farmstead in response to a callout. As events unfold tensions escalate and Beru, becoming increasingly agitated, attacks the Stormtroopers with a thermal detonator, ultimately resulting in her own death and that of her spouse. So, while Rubio's film is clearly a tongue-in-cheek homage to the original work, it is yet another distinctive example of an amateur exercising their right to free play with copyrighted material.

Of added intrigue is Rubio's claim that Lucas considers *Troops* to be officially canon within the *Star Wars* universe (Rubio, 2017). It remains to be seen what prompted Lucas to make such an admission and, given his revisionist tendencies, to what extent his assertion is genuine. Moreover, this is not the first time Lucas would retroactively add material to the *Star Wars* mythos that he was not responsible for creating. Nonetheless this is a noteworthy, if not ironic, example representing a certain role-reversal: Lucas's alleged acceptance of the events depicted in *Troops* as official canon can be seen as the appropriation of unsanctioned fan material into the franchise's official legend. In a direct contradiction of the guidelines described earlier by Brooker, this serves to further blur the boundaries of acceptable behaviour in the longstanding arrangement between Lucasfilm and *Star Wars* fans over the use of series-related material.

Despite not being as economically successful as *Hardware Wars* the film had an arguably larger cultural impact. Made on the cusp of the digital turn introduced and explored earlier in the thesis, *Troops* showed how "far more was possible on a tight budget than in the *Hardware Wars* days" (Taylor, 2016 p. 166) – and even perhaps since *StarLego* only seven years earlier. As well as inspiring a seemingly endless legion of *Star Wars* parodies the film achieved enormous critical praise, winning the inaugural Pioneer Award at Lucasfilm's Official *Star Wars* Fan Film Awards in 2002. Furthermore, the film would act as Rubio's calling card to the film industry and, in an inspiring turn of events, culminate in his eventual employment at Lucasfilm.

Troops was followed three years later by the first in a long line of fan edits which directly challenge Lucas head-on over his self-confessed "first love" of editing. These edits

are also explicit evidence of the "digital narcissism" described by Andrew Keen (2008 p. xiii) – whereby amateur online production is seen to increasingly supersede that of industry professionals – as their creators seek to, in Lucas's words, "have it their way". While editing in the form of fan vidding has been a longstanding practice in amateur production (Jenkins (2013 pp.223 – 249), this sub-genre of creativity traditionally involved the use of videotapes for creation and dissemination. However, the transition to computer-based technology and proliferation of this material digitally following the shift of fandom online posed greater problems for copyright holders seeking to protect their intellectual property; file sharing, instantaneous downloads, and the use of virtual private networks (VPN) to protect the identity of those involved means the digital spread of material risks contravening copyright and piracy laws.

Dissatisfied with the first instalment of Lucas's prequel trilogy, *Star Wars: Episode I – The Phantom Menace* (1999), Mike J. Nichols decided to "challenge himself" by recutting a VHS version of the film "into something that, had it been released as THE theatrical version, would not have alienated as many people" (quoted in Rodgers, 2001; original emphasis). Suggesting that "[h]ad I had Lucas's original elements to work with, I could promise an even better final product" (ibid), Nichols edited the film over a period of four months with what he describes as "the care and attention of a Lucas team member" (quoted in Kraus, 2001). The result was *Star Wars: Episode I.I: The Phantom Edit* (2000), a reimagining which removed 20 minutes of content from the original theatrical feature leading to what Nichols "believe[s] to be a much stronger film" (ibid).

While Nichols would subsequently apologise for the ensuing furore surrounding his "well-intentioned editing demonstration that escalated out of my control" (ibid), his actions nevertheless raise a number of ethical, legal, and moral concerns related to this sub-genre of amateur production. Furthermore, his sincerity is rendered questionable given that Nichols would go on to release a re-edit of *Episode II – Attack of the Clones* (2002), dubbed *Episode II.I: Attack of the Phantom* (2002). Lucas would reflect on these issues in an interview with Gavin Smith (2002). Indicating that he had not at the time seen *The Phantom Edit*, the conversation proceeds as follows:

> [Smith] *What do you make of its existence?*
>
> [Lucas] Well, everybody wants to be a filmmaker. Part of what I was hoping for with making movies in the first place was to inspire people to be creative. *The Phantom Edit* was fine as long as they didn't start selling it. Once they started selling it, it became a piracy issue. I'm on the Artist Rights Foundation board, and the issue of non-creators of a movie going in and changing things and then selling it as something else is wrong (Smith, 2002 p. 32; original italics).

As noted in Chapter 3, Lucas goes on to defend his approach to the *Special Edition Trilogy* – which saw him change the original films and sell them as new "improved" versions – by applying the same logic. What is useful to note here is the rather *laissez-faire* attitude of

Lucas and Lucasfilm toward such challenging appropriations of their IP, and how this dormancy changed at the threat of external parties profiting from their franchise. That he and the company seemed content to allow such behaviour to occur sits at odds with the corporate terms-of-use guidelines developed in the early 1990s for the Lucasfilm website, as well as those implemented in the accompanying film awards. Moreover, it seems to also add insult to those fan fiction writers persecuted for their slash stories, which were created and distributed without financially-motivated intentions. Ultimately it seems that Lucas and the company deemed the threat of X-rated fan fiction a greater threat than the burgeoning growth of fan edits.

A particularly impressive example demonstrating the collaborative potential of new media is Casey Pugh's *Star Wars Uncut* (2010). Like *Raiders of the Lost Ark: The Adaptation*, Pugh's film is a remake of that which inspired it. What makes *Star Wars Uncut* different, however, is that it faithfully recreates Lucas's 1977 original with wholly amateur material in the form of individual 15 minute segments. A recreational homage, it required the innovative use of emerging technology necessitating a certain level of technical literacy; Pugh asked would-be contributors to film their own segments, electronically submit them to the purpose-built website, and vote for those to be used in the final product (Lloyd, 2010). That the film would subsequently win an Emmy award in the relatively new interactive media category (Stelter, 2010) demonstrates a significant impact on the industry for what was, essentially, a fan-made remake. Indeed, this indicates a remarkable shift in the perception of amateur films; industry acclaim and recognition suggest that perhaps the conventional marginalisation and belittling of such films has been consigned, rightly, to the past. A comparable example of this is the series of anthology films celebrating the 40th anniversary of Ridley Scott's *Alien* (1979), a collaboration between Fox and "emerging filmmakers" and creators on crowdsourcing platform Tongal (Trumbore, 2019).

As history shows, Mike Nichols's prequel trilogy edits would act as precursors to a slew of successive projects with matching aims, all of which likewise raise concerns about appropriation, artists' rights, and tampering with film history. Seeking to remove the digital alterations introduced by Lucas in the years after the films were released, *Harmy's Despecialized Edition* (2011) is a restoration initiative undertaken by Petr Harmáček. In an interview with Ewen Hosie (2015) Harmáček reveals he was motivated to do so after realising that the versions of *The Empire Strikes Back* (1980) and *Return of the Jedi* (1983) he watched as a child were not the untouched theatrical cuts. Harmáček is particularly critical of Lucas in this interview and his language, intentionally or otherwise, draws evocative parallels with the director's own 1988 testimonies as detailed in the previous chapter.

Asserting that it "made [him] pretty angry" to discover that the effects in the newer versions were "re-composited digitally", Harmáček argues that this caused them to "los[e] much of their historical value" (quoted in Hosie, 2015). He continues, criticising Lucas's

sustained endeavour to “suppress the original versions” and equating this to “an act of cultural vandalism, because it’s an attempt to bury the work” of the original effects artists (ibid). Not only this, but as explored in the previous chapter, the films were not directed by Lucas himself. So, to borrow Harmáček’s term: Lucas also, in effect, “buries” the work of other directors under his artistic vision. More than just exercising his right to free play, then, Harmáček’s claims in this interview suggest that his decision to “restore” the original films stems from an apparently philanthropic desire to see Lucas’s attempts to rewrite cultural history – his “cultural vandalism” – undone. This appears to be the motivation behind a near-identical endeavour undertaken by Team Negative One who, according to Charlie Lyne (2016), correspondingly wanted to “restore the film to its former glory”, and in high definition (Lyne, 2016).

Nevertheless, as earnestly altruistic as his motivation appears to be, his “despecialized” editions nonetheless cross boundaries beyond which fair use and commentary protect. Moreover, that the technology exists *in the domestic sphere*, allowing people like Harmáček to effectively revise film history to their own philosophical tastes, clearly and justifiably concerns the media industry – and it should be a concern for society, too, as it opens up the potential for a plurality of film histories and unofficial, competing, alternative film cuts. In an age of “fake news” and media subterfuge, a strong argument could be made that preserving genuineness and originality remains as important as ever, not only to maintain artistic integrity, but a wider social integrity.

Worryingly, a number of recent politically-motivated fan edits have sought to undermine the representation of minorities by effectively excising their presence. As its title suggests, *The Last Jedi: De-Feminized Fanedit* (2017) was created by an anonymous figure unhappy with the presence of female characters in *Star Wars: Episode VIII – The Last Jedi* (2017), particularly Rose Tico, played by Asian-American actress Kelly Marie Tran. The edit thus minimises her contribution to the narrative by reducing her screentime and that of other female characters (Mlot, 2018). *Avengers: Endgame* (2019) was given a similar treatment. Neda Ulaby (2019) reports that female characters were either marginalised or removed entirely, like Brie Larson’s Captain Marvel, and African superhero Black Panther saw his narrative impact truncated because, according to the anonymous editor, “[h]e’s really not that important” (quoted in Ulaby, 2019).

Less socially reactive but equally legally questionable, *Star Wars Episode III.5: The Editor Strikes Back* (2012) was created by Topher Grace who shared Mike Nichols’s disaffection with the prequel trilogy. Grace revealed that the project was a personal exercise in editing as he wanted to “lean about the process” (quoted in Billington, 2012), and the result is an 85-minute long production combining the three films in a significantly streamlined single feature. In a related venture, Grace would later recut Peter Jackson’s *Hobbit* trilogy into an unnamed, two-hour edit considerably condensing the series narrative, contending that it “should’ve been one movie” in the first place (quoted in Kohn, 2018). This followed a

comparable attempt by the aptly named tolkieneditor, dubbed *The Hobbit: The Tolkien Edit* (2015). The removal of "narrative filibustering", unnecessary subplots, and longer-then-necessary sequences enabled tolkieneditor to reduce the overall runtime and create a single film which, by their own admission, "more closesly resembled Tolkien's original novel" (tolkieneditor, 2015).

The subject of an earlier shot-for-shot remake, *Raiders of the Lost Ark* would act as the basis for Steven Soderbergh's edit, simply titled *Raiders* (2014). Unique, given his industry background as a director, *Raiders* engages with many of the themes explored thus far. Developed as an exercise in understanding the practice of staging scenes and shots Soderbergh re-edited the original film in black-and-white, replacing the original audio track with a new score "designed to aid you in your quest to just study the visual staging aspect" (Soderbergh, 2014). As such Soderbergh, like Zala, does not attempt to redefine any of the characters or retroactively change any of the events depicted in the original film. Seemingly invoking and inverting the spirit of Ted Turner – alluding to the legality of his behaviour by writing that "I'm not saying I'm like, ALLOWED to do this" (ibid) – Soderbergh's aims are more educational, as evidenced in the disclaimer introducing the film. The director is instead more interested in the visual aesthetic of the film and how the mise-en-scène is used throughout, rather than any concerns about making money from this decolourised remake.

To compare the unofficial edits described above, particularly those of *Star Wars*, with those sanctioned and undertaken by Lucas himself, the thesis has already explored his questionably moral behaviour in reworking the films of other directors. To return to Sandvoss, I would contend here that Lucas's *Special Edition* trilogy represents an extreme example of a self-obsessed fan edit – one demonstrating a highly narcissistic self-reflection between Lucas and his own work. The behaviour of Lucas and the fan editors also, conceivably, reflects Keen's discussion of digital narcissism introduced earlier: while the amateur editors explicitly invoke this through their DIY approach, Lucas's digital narcissism is evident in his variety of retroactive additions made possible by the technological advances he was spearheading. Discussing the benefits of nonlinear editing, which was pioneered by Lucas, Michael Rubin (2000) warns it is "important to recognize the point at which continued tweaking no longer makes the results genuinely better, but simply "different"" (2000 p. 8). It is this "continued tweaking" which largely inspired the edits of both trilogies as fans seek to, like Harmáček, either restore the original films to their initial glory or undermine Lucas's artistic vision by "improving" the quality of the prequel series, like Grace and Nichols.

While the examples discussed in this section demonstrate particularly inventive uses of series-related material – whether to pay homage, undo digital additions, or reduce and improve narrative flow – the unauthorised edits raise particularly pertinent issues about the legality of this behaviour, particularly because they involve the active remixing and re-presentation of copyrighted material. As technology makes it much easier to take existing texts, overwrite them, and publish them anew, these moral and legal concerns pose

significant questions for society moving forward. The implications surrounding the production and distribution of such films means that access to them is strictly limited. *Harmy's Despecialized Edition*, for example, is available only through BitTorrent and file-sharing sites. Initially available for purchase on VHS and DVD via online auction sites, access to *The Phantom* Edit has became similarly illegal following intervention from Lucasfilm which made clear that "we can't allow them to edit and distribute our films for profit" (quoted in Greenberg, 2001). Topher Grace's *Star Wars* edit was presented during a one-time screening only for close associates, with no intent to release it for public viewing unsurprisingly forthcoming. The work of Fosselius and Rubio, initially freely-distributed on physical media, too, has become hard-to-find and access through official channels – although *Troops* exists in several versions on platforms like YouTube, suggesting that even these older films can find new a life digitally. Interestingly Soderbergh's edit is also freely available online via his own site and does not, indeed *could* not legally, require financial payment to access.

4.5 – Conclusion

> ***The culture of media entertainment […] is being infused with new modes of authorship, production, marketing, and consumption that are characterized by Internet fan clubs, online producer-consumer affiliations, and real-world legal controversies over the propriety ownership of digital bits of information***
>
> (Shefrin, 2004 p. 261)

Despite being maligned in some circles and, as suggested by Zimmermann, dismissed as the insignificant by-products of consumer technology, this chapter has explored how such films are valuable for the new light they shine on the past – demonstrating an evolution in stylistic codes and conventions at the same time as giving a voice to once marginalised communities. They also, as claimed by Jenkins, illustrate the inherent creative nature of humans to document domestic life, produce their own fiction films, or to creatively borrow from and expand upon existing fictional universes.

While Charles Caleb Colton (1824) would likely describe the examples discussed in the final section attempting to imitate, or even best, Lucas as "flattery" (1824 p. 114), it might be more accurate to reconsider them as efforts to "fix" the damage incurred by his prequel films and the altered originals – literally, in the case of the fan edits which actively seek to overwrite the work of the original artist. They also demonstrate what the technological tools available to their creators at the time enabled them to do in terms of production and distribution. In relation to anxieties about the subversion and questioning of hierarchies they also raise a thought-provoking examination of the amateur-professional divide and how we judge each accordingly.

For example, Ernie Fosselius and his *Hardware Wars* co-creator Michael Wiese were not “pure amateurs” and instead had a professional background, ranging from animation to documentary making (Young, 2008 p. 63 – 65). Similarly, Kevin Rubio came from the television industry which undoubtedly provided him with a number of skills and abilities not available to everyday people (Young, 2008 p. 138). While the creators of *Raiders of the Lost Ark: The Adaptation* had no industry background, they did have access to professional equipment through Strompolos’s mother who worked at a local television station (Young, 2008 pp. 101; 111). Kevin Burffit and Myles Abbott likewise had no film-related background but were able to use their experience as programmers to access advanced technology – commercially unavailable at the time – and create software to produce their own film. Casey Pugh, the man behind *Star Wars Uncut*, was also able to use his background in software development to implement new digital media technology and create this unique film. Furthermore, both Topher Grace and Steven Soderbergh come from the film industry and are no doubt privy to the same, if not better, equipment and techniques which enabled their edits. As demonstrated by Mike Nichols, Petr Harmáček, and tolkieneditor, however, consumer technology has – to borrow Zimmermann’s phrase – “paralleled” that of the professional industry to increasingly blur the lines between what is possible for “amateurs” to achieve.

As a result it is clear to see how new media and digital technology have challenged the long-entrenched divide between amateurs and professionals. As I have shown, with the evolution and sophistication of technology, there has not been a “break” in filmmaking as had once been feared. Instead, a new continuity has been introduced which has seen these established hierarchies and power relations reimagined. Indeed, we now no longer identify and judge any distinction between amateur and professional so harshly as before. Instead, concerns seem to have shifted to the ethical, legal, and moral implications of appropriation in all its forms. By considering amateur production within *Star Wars* fandom in particular, the middle section demonstrated how, for Shefin, this type of transformative appropriation is affecting traditional concepts of authorship, production, and consumption. Increasingly so, as online platforms like those discussed earlier make the distribution of potentially copyright-infringing material much easier to do, and much harder to police as a result.

Indeed, as explored earlier, improved digital infrastructure and enhanced file-sharing networks pose a greater challenge to media conglomerates than the underground distribution of fanzines ever did. This challenge was demonstrated in Lucasfilm’s ongoing attempts to control the unsanctioned use of their brand. While largely unsuccessful, given the rise of alternative media outlets for this material, it is a useful case study of a company struggling to adapt to the new digital age. The following chapter takes another approach to this struggle. It seeks to understand how Lucasfilm and other media houses like it have used these emerging platforms to their advantage in the promotion and delivery of their content.

Chapter 5 – The Film Text and the Paratext in the Digital Age

Film and television shows [...] are only a small part of the massive, extended presence of filmic and televisual texts across our lived environments. [...] rarely if ever can a film or program serve as the only source of information about the text

(Gray, 2010 pp. 2 – 3)

5.1 – Introduction

> ***A film, an object we usually consider to be a self-sufficient work, possessing a narrative with its own mode of closure, is being crafted more like a land-mine: to scatter on impact across as wide a topographical and semantic field as possible***
>
> (Elsaesser, 1998 p. 156)

Thomas Elsaesser's above analogy refers specifically to the production and promotion of blockbuster films, a template which involves "break[ing] up the film text into as many part-objects as possible, which then cascade through the whole entertainment and information space, bouncing off the multi-faceted surfaces of the social mirrors that englobe us users of the audio-visual media" (ibid). Otherwise known as market saturation, this tactic has become popular thanks to the proliferation of "social mirrors", including digital delivery platforms and new media outlets – particularly social media. Multinational media conglomerates now have the ability to constantly bombard or, rather, "englobe" society with a range of promotional paratexts, with the fundamental aim of ensuring that we cannot escape the impending release of the latest blockbuster.

Accordingly, Henry Jenkins, Sam Ford, and Joshua Green (2018) affirm that it has become imperative for such companies to create and disseminate viral media; that is, promotional material designed to "disseminate[] like a pandemic" and 'infect' those it comes into contact with, across as many media conduits as possible (2018 p. 17). The manifestation of these "part-objects" varies: behind-the-scenes production updates; interviews with cast and crew; a seemingly unending barrage of teaser images, posters, trailers, and, growingly popular, teaser-teasers; as well as conventional print, radio, and television advertisements. Even after a film's theatrical run ends the part-objects continue to "scatter" and cascade – if they ever truly stopped; audiences are encouraged to revisit the film in a similar blitzkrieg campaign promoting its upcoming home media release, prompting consumers to pre-order or buy it now. For Tom Gunning (2006), this is a lingering effect of the "Hollywood advertising policy" inextricably tied to the "cinema of attractions [which] directly solicits spectator attention, inciting visual curiosity, and supplying pleasure through an exciting spectacle" (2006 pp. 384 – 387). Thus, marketing a film with the oft-repeated hyperbolic superlatives like "must-own" or "must-see" promises an unmissable experience.

Despite variances in delivery and form, the end result is the same; as Sarah Atkinson (2014) observes: "[e]xposure to these materials ensures the persistent extrusion of the existence of the film into the public's consciousness" (2014 p. 15). Typically, we become aware of a film months, even years, in advance of its release via an initial press announcement – or, increasingly, a social media post from someone involved with the production – and, thanks to the material to be discussed here, remains ever-present in social consciousness long after it has left cinemas.

The previous chapter explored how amateur filmmaking paralleled the evolution of its commercial, professional counterpart since early 20th century. Here the thesis investigates how cinema as a whole has "pervaded everyday life via other media channels" (Atkinson, 2014 p. 15); historically "to expedite marketing and promotional imperatives" (ibid), with more recent shifts to facilitate narrative expansion beyond the cinema screen and the core film-text. The chapter begins by reconsidering how the permeation of cinema via ancillary media texts, like staged events and promotional giveaways, was initially used to augment attendance figures. It moves on to show how, as alluded to in Chapter 2, this inspired the revival of a reimagined blockbuster model under the stewardship of George Lucas and Steven Spielberg in the mid-to-late 1970s – a blueprint which ultimately provided the impetus behind the regeneration of the Hollywood studio system and has become, for better or worse, a staple of the contemporary filmmaking process. I will then review how technology has played a significant role in creating new avenues for film promotion, with particular emphasis on the increased use of the Internet and social media, and how Hollywood has adapted in response to ensure the sustained success of blockbuster filmmaking. As such, the final section analyses a number of case studies which benefit from digital platforms and employ emerging innovative strategies to reach their intended audience.

5.2 – Paratextual Promotion: from Schlockbuster to Blockbuster

> ***From as early as the 1920s, there is evidence to suggest the existence of covert film marketing techniques which blended cinema and the world of film into reality, predominantly through the staging of live cinematic events in the locale of movie theatres***
>
> (Atkinson, 2014 p. 18)

Gérard Genette's (1997) paratextual theory posits that a text is "rarely presented in an unadorned state, unreinforced and unaccompanied by a certain number of verbal or other productions" (1997 p. 1). For Genette, these paratexts – the author, the title, the publisher – surround the text and constitute a "*threshold* […] that offers the world at large the possibility of either stepping inside or turning back" from the text (1997 p. 2; original italics). This "threshold" serves to influence our pre-reading of a text and inform our expectations accordingly; we generally know what to expect from a novel with the name of Ian Fleming, Stephen King, or J.R.R. Tolkien emblazoned on the cover. Shaping our preconceptions in such a way allows us to decide whether or not we want to "cross" the threshold and read the text. Paratexts operate equally effectively as film marketing tools. Finola Kerrigan (2010) describes key elements bound to the film text – actors, classification, director, editor, genre, studio, and writer – as forming its "marketing mix" (2010 pp. 81 – 102). The mix acts both "as a recipe for filmmakers and marketers to consider when marketing their film", and "as a cocktail of clues which consumers look to in order to select films within the marketplace"

(2010 p. 81). This “cocktail” works on one level to sell a film to potential viewers, relying on an assumption that they are familiar with the previous work of those involved and will want to see their latest offering. Simultaneously, this is supplemented by myriad promotional artefacts created to form a widespread paratextual threshold. Ultimately, even if potential audience members are unfamiliar with the individuals involved, these paratexts can better-inform their decision to engage with the film. So, while the names of artists attached to a film act as paratexts in their own right – Daniel Day Lewis implies an intense character study; Stanley Kubrick suggests a meticulously crafted narrative; Universal Studios was historically synonymous with monster-pictures – the use of tailor-made material offers a representative preview of what the final product will be.

The use of paratextual material to promote a film is a longstanding practice. Several unorthodox approaches emerged alongside conventional tactics in the early 20th century, like the so-called Street Car Stunt “whereby a young girl repeatedly shout[ed] about a film showing at the local cinema into her seemingly deaf grandpa’s ear trumpet in crowded street cars” in order to generate public awareness and exposure (Atkinson, 2014 p. 18). An equally unconventional gimmick staged by cinema chain executive Harold B. Franklin for *The Covered Wagon* (1923) saw a group of Indian Americans set up camp in New York’s Central Park to likewise conjure awareness and discussion ahead of its release (Atkinson, 2014 p. 19). In the days before omnipresent social media and 24/7 news coverage, these exploits, and others like them, act as precedents for the spreadable viral media described earlier as film distributors and exhibitors, working within radically different circumstances, sought to attract as many viewers as possible via word of mouth.

The discussion of these and similar incidents seeking to create and sustain self-made publicity directly invokes Daniel Boorstin’s theory of “pseudo-events” (2012 pp. 7 – 44). The term was first coined in 1962 and refers to a “new kind of synthetic novelty which has flooded our experience” (2012 p. 9). Boorstin continues, describing the four characteristics synonymous with these “novelties”. Pseudo-events are inherently “not spontaneous” and, like contemporary advertising, they usually involve meticulous planning and preparation. Following this, they are then “planted primarily […] for the immediate purpose of being reported or reproduced” (2012 p. 11). Consequently, argues Boorstin, the motivations behind their creation are “ambiguous” – and it is this ambiguity which is intended to both captivate and fuel widespread audience attention. Boorstin uses a train wreck as an example to claim that

> [w]hile the news interest in a train wreck is in *what* happened and in real consequences, the interest in an interview is always, in a sense, in *whether* it really happened and in what might have been the motives. Did the statement really mean what it said? Without some of this ambiguity a pseudo-event cannot be very interesting (ibid).

The final attribute of a pseudo-event is its existence as a "self-fulfilling prophecy" (2012 p. 12). To illustrate this he uses a fictional hotel celebrating its 30th anniversary to argue that "[t]he hotel's [...] celebration, by saying that the hotel is a distinguished institution, actually makes it one" (ibid). By recognising that the ambiguity rises out of the fabrication and framing of the event itself, Boorstin is essentially describing the postmodern theory of hyperrealism some two decades before the term was formulated by Jean Baudrillard (Storey, 2012 p. 193): by questioning their reality and staged-ness, these pseudo-events become hyperreal.

Ultimately this hyperrealism has negative consequences for an always-connected society. The endless stream of media means that the public is continuously inundated with a torrent of content. As such, events can quickly become forgotten or lost in the digital sea – particularly those which fail to achieve viral status. This drives the creation of more peculiar pseudo-events intended to make a bigger impact online, like Jimmy Kimmel's infamous "Worst Twerk Fail EVER" video (Nordyke, 2013). For Boorstin, "[w]e want and believe these illusions because we suffer from extravagant expectations" and are willing to accept them as real (2012 p. 3). However, the continued demand for such "illusions" has a detrimental effect on the collective psyche which necessitates an escalation of deception: "[b]y harboring, nourishing, and ever enlarging our extravagant expectations we create the demand for the illusions with which we deceive ourselves. And which we pay others to make to deceive us" (2012 p. 5). The result, then, is an aggrandising cycle of chicanery and deceit: once a certain level of artifice becomes *de facto*, our "extravagant expectations" demand more nourishment, in turn leading to the generation of increasingly outlandish fantasies and deceptions, which again raises the level of required fanciful sustenance.

This has manifested itself in the film industry in a number of ways. Mark Thomas McGee (1989) chronicles the implementation of promotional gimmicks throughout the twentieth century, citing William Castle as a pioneering marketing merchant whose inventive use of ballyhoo, paratexts, and publicity stunts has had a lasting impact (1989 pp. 21 – 30). Castle's unorthodox antics – like faux death insurance policies, "Emergo", "Percepto", and "Illusion-O" – are chronicled in great detail elsewhere (ibid; see also Castle, 1992). Noteworthy here is the fact that like Lucas, Castle was able to use his considerable power and leverage to ensure his creative vision was respected; a vision which frequently extended beyond his films to the unconventional means used to market them and satisfy Boorstinian audience demands for "something bigger – more exciting" (Castle, 1992 p. 151). As the subsequent discussion illustrates, this has had a tangible impact on the type of film being made and the turn to high-concept blockbuster filmmaking, particularly from the mid-1970s.

Appearing alongside the various Castle-esque marketing strategies in the mid-20th century were a number of technical pseudo-innovations attempting to similarly kindle interest in watching a film in cinemas, with an underlying motive to combat the growing influence of television. Many of these have been derided as "nothing more than a fancy name" because competitors simply adopted newly-emerging formats and retitled them in order to stand-out

in an increasingly saturated market (McGee, 1989 p. 99). For example, Ray Harryhausen's Dynamation inspired a legion of derivative imitators including Dynarama, Electrolitic Dynamation, Fantamation, Fantascope, Regiscope, Spectamation, and Super Dynamation which all, to varying degrees, feature the blending of live action, stop-motion, cartoons, and matte backgrounds. While the imitation of Castle-inspired tactics supports Fabrice Lyczba's (2016) claim that "ballyhoo stunts were progressively shunted from mainstream exploitation techniques in the 1920s to lower forms of B-grade exploitation cinema in the 1950s" (2016 p. 116), these uninspired technical imitations are indicative of wider changes in film promotion which sought to capitalise on a generally technologically-undiscerning public. On marketing these innovations, or lack thereof, to the public, McGee suggests that "[o]ne of the interesting paradoxes of the motion picture business is that everyone in it wants to be the first with something new except they want someone else to try it first" (1989 p. 7). As chronicled in Chapter 2, sound and colour thus provide key historical examples of this paradox; initially dismissed as frivolous gimmicks, their introductions would profoundly shape the development of the industry moving forward.

The proliferation of widescreen formats during the 1950s demonstrates how aspect ratio became another key selling point as studios not only sought to differentiate themselves from each other, but also from television. Indeed, David Welling (2007) foregrounds the advent of television and decreasing weekly cinema attendance figures as two key factors necessitating the development of these new supersized formats. For Welling, a film claiming to be presented in the latest, innovative aspect ratio became "the biggest hook used in the business" to market films to audiences at the time (2007 p. 197). Industry figures like Spyros Skouras, former head of 20th Century Fox, were quick to act on this. Skouras maintained a widely-held belief that "the studios had to emphasize the advantages of movies over television" by making the most of the larger screen available to filmmakers (1989 p. 39). Consequently, he spearheaded the development of CinemaScope, a widescreen aspect ratio which was intended to be a "low budget" version of Fred Waller's Cinerama, which engendered its own legion of imitators (McGee, 1989 pp. 41 – 57). Welling comments that, perhaps unsurprisingly, in the wake of CinemaScope, "[t]he wide-screen parade continued with a long list of other processes, or variations on the existing ones" (2007 p. 198). That the CinemaScope format was able to survive the challenges posed by increasingly intense competition to become "the most widely accepted, and is still in use to this day" (ibid) is testament to its underlying resilience. Furthermore, as explored in Chapter 2, rather than marking one of the many deaths of cinema, the advent of television and the ensuing format war instead sparked a new cycle of creativity within the film industry as studios sought to retain audiences by promising them a spectacular viewing experience available only in theatres.

The iterative cycle of competitive imitation above supports McGee's earlier paradox concerning the introduction of new technology; not surprising, due to the costly research and

development investment associated with industrial modernisation. Studios have been historically reluctant to openly embrace new methods or technologies due to fear of the unknown, or due to negative past experience of a particular format, which may result in financial losses. This is particularly apt with the phenomenon of 3D which has had a well-documented troublesome relationship with audiences, exhibitors, and studios alike (McGee, 1989 pp. 59 – 98; Welling, 2007 pp. 199 – 200). Debuting in the same year as CinemaScope (Monaco, 2009 p. 650), the persistence of 3D belies the three main challenges it has seemingly always faced: studios reluctant to fully support the still-burgeoning format, exhibitors anxious on how to adapt to the necessary technological requirements, and audiences who regard it as a novelty. Indeed, for McGee, "it began to look as if 3-D was dead" only a year after it first appeared in 1953 (1989 p. 84). However, interest in 3D would be rekindled in several waves in following years, at which times it would "venture forth […] only to be buried again beneath the weight of the inferior productions it attempted to enhance" (McGee, 1989 p. 93). Recent attempts to reinvigorate 3D, thanks to the "more sophisticated techniques" afforded by digital technology (Monaco, 2009 p. 612) and the support of major animation studios including Pixar and Dreamworks (Monaco, 2009 p. 121), have been equally short-lived, but still demonstrate how the format arguably remains "worthy of sustained consideration" (Jackman, 2015). Nevertheless, the financial success of *Avatar* (2009) and the critical acclaim of *Gravity* (2013) failed to generate sufficient long-term interest. Re-releases of older films like *Terminator 2: Judgment Day* (1991), *Jurassic Park* (1993), and *Titanic* (1997), which were retroactively converted to 3D, have likewise been sporadic and unsuccessful in significantly revitalising the format (Lloyd, 2020). Moreover, Peter Jackson's attempt to introduce a higher frame rate (48 fps) in combination with 3D in his *Hobbit* Trilogy (2012 – 2014) was met with an equally tepid response (Breznican, 2012). In line with McGee's claim that "the novelty" of 3D "burned itself out" early on "because the time simply wasn't right" (1989 p. 95), this fundamentally suggests that 3D is somewhat of an anomaly and it remains to be seen when, and even if, the time will be right for its triumphant return.

When evaluated as paratextual gimmicks, the range of competing aspect ratios, exhibition strategies, and promotional stunts described above legitimise Genette's observation that "[t]he ways and means of the paratext change continually, depending on period, culture, genre, author, work, and edition, with varying degrees of pressure" (1997 p. 3). As the means of film promotion change due to the socio-economic developments and forces exerted by the industry, so too do the "ways and means" of the cinematic medium itself. This is perfectly demonstrated in the birth of the high concept, blockbuster model of filmmaking in the late 1970s. For Wheeler Winston Dixon (2001), George Lucas and Steven Spielberg share a "malign influence" which led directly to the rejuvenation of the studio system at the end of the decade (2001 p. 316). Spielberg's *Jaws* (1975) and Lucas's *Star*

Wars effectively introduced a lucrative new era of filmmaking. According to Jon Lewis (2007), these films

> took things to another level (financially at least) while at the same time hinting at another sort of moviemaking that did not require such big concessions to talent […]. The studios' short-lived embrace of the auteur theory ended just as Lucas and Spielberg presented them with a new formula for making movies and money (Lewis, 2007 p. 66).

With *Jaws*, Spielberg laid the foundations upon which Lucas would fully implement the blockbuster model. Peter Biskind (1998) claims that the film "changed the business forever [and] whet corporate appetites for big profits quickly" (1998 p. 278). Moreover, he describes Spielberg as the "Trojan horse through which the studios began to reassert their power" (ibid). Its promotional campaign introduced unparalleled distribution-exhibition strategies (Elsaesser, 2012 p. 244), television advertisements worth $700,000, and a swathe of paratextual merchandise including, somewhat appropriately, beach towels (Smith, 2005).

Dade Hayes and Jonathan Bing (2004) report that Universal Studios, responsible for distributing and co-producing the film, was then owned by MCA Inc., a "TV-oriented company well-positioned to take full advantage of the medium" via "selectively targeted" advertising campaigns, at a time when advertising on television networks in America was used "sporadically" to promote films due to the relatively small number of networks (2004 p. 158). Consequently, this provided MCA with a "highly consolidated mass audience" which they were apt to exploit in the promotion of *Jaws* (2004 p. 159). Not only is this clear evidence of the interdependent relationship between cinema and television, it is a useful example illustrating how the needs of multimedia conglomerates would be shaped moving forward. An intense television advertising campaign in a less-fragmented media landscape worked alongside fervent word of mouth in the days before social media to generate high levels of anticipation that would be the envy of marketing executives today.

Indeed, *Jaws* would go on to make $260 million in the United States; testament not only to its quality, but also a result of the carefully constructed marketing campaign and nationwide opening the film benefited from (Block and Wilson, 2010 pp. 572 – 573). As such, it sparked a battle for box office supremacy. Its record-breaking haul ensured *Jaws* became the highest-grossing film of all time until it was succeeded by *Star Wars* two years later. Spielberg would return to the top spot with *E.T. The Extra-Terrestrial* (1982), and solidify his dominance of the global box office with with *Jurassic Park* (O'Neill, 2021). James Cameron would eventually usurp and emulate Spielberg, first with *Titanic* and later *Avatar*, the first film to gross over $2 billion worldwide (Segers, 2010). This feat was recently repeated by *Avengers: Endgame* (2019) which obliterated *Avatar*'s box office haul in record time to become the current highest-grossing film ever (Whitten, 2019). It is evident, then, that the early Lucas-Spielberg dominance of the box office represents a successful implementation of their filmmaking model. As history shows, this quickly grew beyond the pair as studios began

to widely adopt a similar style. The following table chronologically lists the top 10 highest-grossing films at the U.S box office in the 1980s based on their textual status:

Film	Textual Status
***Star Wars: Episode V – The Empire Strikes Back* (1980) † ***	Sequel
***Raiders of the Lost Ark* (1980) † ***	Franchise
***E.T. The Extra-Terrestrial* (1982) † ***	Standalone
***Tootsie* (1982)**	Standalone
***Star Wars: Episode VI – Return of the Jedi* (1983) † ***	Sequel
***Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom* (1984) † ***	Sequel
***Back to the Future* (1984) † ***	Franchise
***Beverly Hills Cop* (1984)**	Franchise
***Ghostbusters* (1984) †**	Franchise
***Batman* (1989) †**	Franchise

Table 5.1 – Table listing textual status of the highest grossing 1980s films (Source: Block and Wilson, 2010 p. 606)

As indicated above, only two of the top 10 are "Standalone" releases; that is, films which have yet to be followed by further cinematic instalments. With the exception of *Beverly Hills Cop* (1984), which was followed by two sequels, those in the "Franchise" category would inspire their own multimedia serial franchises. Finally, three sequels complete the top 10. Eight of the films followed the *Jaws*-inspired summer release pattern, premiering between May and August of their respective release year (see daggers). Remarkably, six also benefited from the direct involvement of either Lucas and/or Spielberg in some capacity (see asterisks), showing that their presence was not necessarily required to guarantee financial success.

Andrew Darley (2000) has recognised that a secondary notable "trend" accompanied, perhaps fuelled, the rise of blockbuster filmmaking in this decade, one "based squarely upon a revitalised resurgence in special effects techniques becomes discernible in the production of these high budget and intensively media-hype movies" (2000 p. 102). As I will later show, this became particularly emblematic of top-grossing films released in subsequent decades. The next section thus engages with Darley's assertion that "though such films still only constitute a small percentage of the overall output of mainstream cinema, they nevertheless invariably capture most of the pre-release publicity and continue to generate most of the profits" (ibid).

Ultimately, Lucas and Spielberg have attracted negative attention for ushering in a new era of studio dominance. History shows that their "films are easy to package and multiply in form and format. Their oeuvre presents a model of contemporary filmmaking in an industry that is no longer (just) about making movies" (Lewis, 2007 p. 68). They have been subsequently branded as "turncoats, as industry players who have achieved success by all too willingly and all too deftly accommodating the studios' formula for successful filmmaking" (Lewis, 2007 p. 69). Both are charged, too, with allegedly "infantilising the audience, reconstituting the spectator as child, then overwhelming him and her with sound and

spectacle, obliterating irony, aesthetic self-consciousness, and critical reflection" (Biskind, 1998 p. 344). I would suggest here that this stretched to the proliferation of collectible paraphernalia, particularly toys, associated with a film that brazenly targeted children and sought to reduce audiences to consumers by overwhelming them with a wave of branded merchandise. As Brian Jay Jones (2016) reminds us, however, Lucas's accomplishment of maintaining merchandising rights was not necessarily borne of financial greed (2016 p. 272; 327). Nevertheless, while George Lucas – nor Steven Spielberg, for that matter – "hardly invented the licensing and merchandising game" with *Star Wars*, it was the "phenomenal success of its merchandising" which, coupled with Lucas's "coup of retaining merchandising and licensing rights", marked the beginning of "a new era" in the way films were packaged and marketed to audiences (Gray, 2010 p. 177).

Chapter 4 explored how the gaps between instalments of Lucas's original trilogy provided fan prosumers, both filmmakers and fan fiction writers, the opportunity to create their own unofficial and uniquely individual paratextual extensions of *Star Wars*. Equally prominent during these "empty" years was the presence of sanctioned series-related merchandise. This began in earnest with Alan Dean Foster's spin-off novel, *Splinter of the Mind's Eye* (1978), which was intended to act as the source for a low-budget *Star Wars* sequel depending upon the success of the first film (Wenz, 2018). Other ancillary texts include the film novelisations co-authored by Foster and Lucas, the ongoing comic series created by Marvel, and the *Star Wars Holiday Special* (1978). Perhaps more important to the franchise, however, were the toys marketed at younger audience members. Jonathan Gray (2010) suggests that between film releases "it was primarily the toys that kept the trilogy alive" (2010 p. 181). Indeed, Justin Wyatt (1994) reports that merchandise generated $300 million within a year of the film's release, a clear demonstration to other studios that merchandising was an important ancillary revenue stream (1994 pp. 152 – 153). This became pivotal for Lucas following his decision to retire the franchise in 1983, with Gray asserting that if the series "was to live and to be saved from becoming its own cold war, it had to enter the body of paratexts" (2010 p. 181). As he continued to pioneer the development of new filmmaking technology throughout the 1980s and early 1990s, the spectre of *Star Wars* did live on in public consciousness thanks to a concerted effort by Lucasfilm to produce a wide range of paratexts. Not only was this to keep the brand alive but it also enabled such research and development to continue unaffected.

The body of work released during this extended hiatus has coalesced into what has been dubbed the *Star Wars* Expanded Universe (SWEU) (Proctor, 2013; Taylor, 2016). Encompassing a number of books, comics, television series, and videogames, the SWEU grew alongside the release of the prequel films (1999 – 2005), and continued to do so until Disney acquired Lucasfilm in 2012 (Solvej, 2012). Following this, the SWEU has since been rebranded (read discontinued) under the Star Wars Legends banner in order to allow "maximum creative freedom" to those involved with moving the franchise forward under

Disney's control (McMillan, 2014). In addition, a story group was designed to "maintain[] the narrative continuity and integrity of all the *Star Wars* properties" released since the acquisition (Kamp, 2017). Several examples clearly illustrate how, as Colin Harvey (2015) asserts, this corpus has "fed back into the *urtext* of the feature film series" (2015 p. 145). At the same time, these examples equally demonstrate Lucas's renowned tendency for revisionism and the unapologetic imposition of his creative will.

The aforementioned *Holiday Special* features the onscreen debut of Boba Fett in an animated segment before his first live action appearance two years later in *The Empire Strikes Back*. Fett would go on to appear in *Return of the Jedi* before his youngest canonical incarnation featured in *Attack of the Clones*. He was later inserted into *A New Hope* and subsequently appeared in the animated *The Clone Wars* series (2008 –). The relationship between these various paratexts demonstrates the symbiotic relationship they all share, and the apparent de-canonisation/disavowal of the *Holiday Special* at Lucas's behest illustrates the contested canonicity within the universe (Taylor, 2016 pp. 271 – 276). This also indicates the power of Lucas as original creator, whose then-authorship over all series-related material remained apparently unquestionable. As Lucas would have it, Fett's first in-universe appearance as a bounty hunter is in the special edition of the original film, released some 20 years later, with his motivation to become one a result of events he witnessed as a youth – the death of his father – in *Attack of the Clones*. For most fans of the original films, however, it is widely accepted that Fett's first appearance is in *The Empire Strikes Back* due to the repression of the much maligned *Holiday Special* (ibid).

Lucas's authorial influence manifested itself again with the introduction of Coruscant. The planet made its first named appearance in Timothy Zahn's *Heir to the Empire* (1991) which, despite existing in the EU, retained a tenuous link to the official canon. Lucas retroactively made it his galactic centre and focal point of the prequel trilogy. While he had allegedly always planned a central planet (Brooker, 2002 p. 107), Lucas's decision to appropriate the work of another creative artist can be seen here as ethically problematic – even though Zahn's contract with Lucasfilm likely ensured he could not claim authorship. Interestingly, this behaviour would not stop following the Disney acquisition. Another of Zahn's creations from the same novel, character Grand Admiral Thrawn became reintroduced to the official canon by appearing in the third season of *Star Wars: Rebels* (2014 – 2018) following the disbandment of the SWEU. This suggests that by redacting his original appearance, Disney are not averse to performing their own act(s) of corporate authorial revisionism by borrowing from the de-canonised franchise *urtext*.

Ethical, legal, and moral implications aside, the actions of first Lucas- and now Disney-controlled Lucasfilm are reminiscent of their attempts to curb the spread of unofficial *Star Wars* material in the late 1990s and early 2000s. The guidelines identified in Chapter 4 ensuring Lucasfilm could effectively control what was submitted to their fan film awards – and those developed granting them intellectual ownership of material posted by fans to their

site – mean this behaviour should not come as a surprise. While he still could, Lucas was able to use his status as copyright holder to seamlessly integrate material from paratexts into the main text. Similarly under Disney, citing the necessity for "maximum creative freedom" for artists involved in moving *Star Wars* forward, Lucasfilm devalued the EU by rebranding and de-canonising it – a move which left open the possibility for over 40 years of canonically *de jure* narrative elements to be reintroduced as new.

Interestingly, the original *Star Wars* films can act as their own paratexts, having themselves been re-released numerous times. This includes the aforementioned *Special Edition* trilogy (1997) and the existence of several competing cuts on home media featuring many digital alterations. Using Gray's theory of "re-authoring" (2016 pp. 34 – 35), I have already considered the implications of Lucas's behaviour in Chapter 3, ultimately concluding that it sets a questionable precedent. For example, these new editions fundamentally undermine a film's sense of "genuineness" and "unique existence" as a work of art (Benjamin, 2008 p. 5). Moreover, claims that a film released in cinemas is incorrect, unfinished, or unrepresentative of the director's artistic vision – only to be supplanted by one or more "correct" versions years later – can be seen as "reducing the authenticity of the cinematic release […] while elevating the paratext in status" (Gray, 2010 p. 89). As argued in Chapter 3, the continued iterative "repurposing" (Klinger, 2006 p. 72) of a film can also undermine film history by disrespecting an artist's original creative vision, particularly when this involves overwriting their work without their support or against their wishes. As noted earlier the implications of this are manifold, and it is worth reaffirming the importance of retaining integrity.

Regardless of any benefits associated with re-releasing a film, which would be largely financial, this practice ultimately works to illustrate the tension between art and commerce, legitimising widely-held concerns about commodification within the industry (Elsaesser, 2001; Horak, 2001). It is important to remember that retroactive tinkering with a film is not the only reason for its re-release, and it is not always the director's sole responsibility for a film existing in several versions. Interference from producers has become an oft-cited explanation for this and regularly involves studio-imposed cuts and alterations, like those forced upon Lucas early in his career. Furthermore, runtime limitations affecting how many screenings can be shown in a day and feedback from audience test screenings similarly impact upon what is excised from theatrical cuts. For example, Kristen Thompson (2007) describes how Peter Jackson's *The Lord of the Rings* (2001 – 2003) trilogy was famously released in cinemas and on home media initially as standard theatrical editions before later being followed by extended editions, first on a film-by-film basis then in a collected boxset. These extended editions provide consumers with considerably more material which, for Gray, "lends them […] extra authority, precisely because they are now a digitally integrated part" of the film itself (2010 p. 89). In addition to new and longer scenes this includes a wide range of production features and making-of documentaries, something

which became a “routinely arranged” part of film production since the 1990s (Thompson, 2007 p. 113). It seems natural that this process was repeated for Jackson’s more recent *Hobbit* trilogy, with a similar approach used in a number of other notable instances.

Following the release of Zack Snyder’s *Batman v Superman: Dawn of Justice* (2016) an extended home media “Ultimate Edition” was unveiled which packaged the theatrical cut together with a newer version including over 30 minutes of material not seen in cinemas. David Ayer’s *Suicide Squad* (2016) received the same treatment with an extended cut accompanying the theatrical version on Blu-ray. This has led to fervent speculation about the potential for extended releases of other superhero films produced by Warner Brothers, such as *Wonder Woman* (2017) and *Justice League* (2017). Although there are no plans to release an extended cut of the former (Foutch, 2017), it has been revealed that Snyder will deliver a re-cut version of *Justice League* on HBO Max (Ramachandran, 2020). More recently, films like *Midsommar* (2019) and *Doctor Sleep* (2019) have been re-authored for their home media releases to restore material excised from the theatrical versions (Brew, 2019; Squires, 2019). Interestingly, films of longtime Lucas associate Francis Ford Coppola have been likewise re-authored, multiple times, for release on home media. Famously, *Apocalypse Now* (1979) has been the subject of much study due to the circumstances surrounding its production, prompting Coppola to oversee several cuts involving competing endings and retroactive changes to scenes (Lowrey, 2019). Similarly, his trilogy of *Godfather* films have been re-released and restored to feature improved picture quality as well as additional material not included in previous theatrical or home media versions (Noller, 2008).

I will discuss alternative examples in the final section more deeply; however the point must be made here because of Gray’s earlier assertion regarding the elevation of the paratext at the expense of the film text. As with the debate about *Star Wars* we once more begin to question the “authenticity” of the original theatrical release: if one approaches a film with the mindset that it can be “improved” or “saved” by an extended or alternate edition, the argument could be made that this has deep implications for film. As a commercial enterprise, studios will undoubtedly promote the re-release of a film ad nauseam for financial gain. However, to channel Benjamin: if we want to preserve its authenticity and genuineness as a form of art, a film in its original state should be left untouched as a product of its time and a distillation of creative artistic vision of those originally involved; it should not be repurposed and repeatedly resold for the financial motivations of the copyright holder.

5.3 – Caught in the Web, on The Web: Paratexts Move Online

> ***The connectivity at the root of contemporary transmedia networks is almost always enabled by digital technologies. Though we might identify such potential in early, analogue media forms, digital technologies have enabled transmedia to accelerate, proliferate and spread***
>
> (Harvey, 2015 p. 37)

The suggestion from Kurt Lancaster and Tom Mikotowicz (2001) that science fiction and fantasy better-enable audiences to "transcend their mundane everyday lives" (2001 p. 1) is echoed by Harvey, who similarly asserts that these genres "boast generic characteristics which make them particularly suited to storytelling across media platforms" (2015 p. 1). The speculative futures, fantastical worlds, and imaginative universes appearing in franchises such as *Blade Runner*, *The Lord of the Rings*, and *Star Wars* offer a seemingly boundless canvas upon which the narrative can unfold. The potential for expanding upon existing fictional mythologies – as well as filling in narrative gaps and releasing various of spin-off stories – seems to inherently promote the use of paratextual storytelling, and partly explains why science fiction and fantasy have, as Harvey claims, "become the dominant modes of transmedia storytelling" (ibid). As argued earlier, a number of, if not all, contemporary multimedia franchises owe their success to the model implemented by *Star Wars*. Although historically it was not the first project to use licensed merchandising, the overwhelming success of its marketing campaign "led to most media companies realising the gold mine that lay within merchandising" (Gray, 2010 p. 186). While the "ways and means" of paratexts may change according to the external forces acting upon them, it is obvious that this model has endured. As revealed in Chapter 2, this is in no small part a result of continued conglomeration within the media landscape, particularly since the 1950s. Indeed, Wyatt proposes that the Lucas-Spielberg marketing phenomenon the pair pioneered is indicative of wider changes within the media landscape, directly

> tied […] to the conglomeration of the industry; many of the conglomerates involved with film industry distribution own companies which can produce merchandised product centered on their films […]. So merchandising not only maintains an image for the film in the market, but also appeals to the conglomerates' desire for synergy between their different companies and products (1994 p. 133).

The top 10 highest-grossing films of the 1990s in the U.S., a decade which saw the proliferation of digital technology in the commercial, domestic, and industrial sectors, is a useful cross-section of examples demonstrating equally important changes – particularly the innovative use of this technology in both the production and promotion of films.

Film	Textual Status
***Home Alone* (1990)**	Franchise

***Jurassic Park* (1993) ***	Franchise
***Forrest Gump* (1994) ***	Standalone
***The Lion King* (1994)**	Standalone
***Twister* (1996) ***	Standalone
***Independence Day* (1996)**	Franchise
***Titanic* (1997)**	Standalone
***Men In Black* (1997)**	Franchise
***The Sixth Sense* (1999)**	Standalone
***Star Wars: Episode I – The Phantom Menace* (1999)**	Franchise

Table 5.2 – Table listing textual status of the highest grossing 1990s films (Source: Block and Wilson, 2010 p. 704)

The even split between Franchise and Standalone films may perhaps be indicative of renewed efforts at original storytelling. This is, however, coupled with an equal number of films inaugurating new blockbuster multimedia franchises – typically motivated by underlying corporate demands for "synergy" in rising multimedia powerhouses. A notable commonality between both categories can be found in the studios responsible for their distribution which characterises the accelerating "industry consolidation" which marked the decade (Block and Wilson 2010 p. 706). For example, 20th Century Fox, then owned by News Corp., handled the distribution of *Home Alone*, *Independence Day*, and Lucas's *Star Wars: Episode I* and co-distributed *Titanic* with Paramount, who – under the ownership of Viacom (ibid) – also oversaw the release of *Forrest Gump*. *Twister* featured a collaboration between Warner Bros, a subsidiary of Time Warner (ibid), and Universal Studios who, also distributors of Spielberg's *Jurassic Park*, were beset by corporate ownership difficulties throughout the decade (Keating and Macmillan, 2009).

These films demonstrate the industry's relative stability in spite of continual shifts occurring throughout the '90s. In addition to the selection of films discussed early in Chapter 2, they are also particularly emblematic of the growing application of sophisticated visual effects. This was spearheaded by Lucas's visual effects studio Industrial Light and Magic (ILM), whose work featured prominently throughout the decade (ILM, 2019; see asterisks). ILM brought dinosaurs back to life in *Jurassic Park* – a "watershed" moment in the history of digital effects (Lucas in Silberman, 2005) – before recreating historical events and locations, like the Vietnam War and its protests, in *Forrest Gump*. For this film, ILM also seamlessly integrated the title character into archival footage as he met historical figures, including ex-president John F. Kennedy. Their work culminated in another milestone in 1999 as *Star Wars: Episode I* featured cinema's first fully digitally-rendered character in Jar Jar Binks (Block and Wilson, 2010 p. 707). Significantly, the film also made substantial use of the Internet for its marketing, something I return to later. An equally momentous breakthrough occurred with Roland Emmerich's *Independence Day*, which extensively used digital visual effects to depict a destructive alien invasion, winning the 1996 Academy Award for best visual effects as a result.

The widespread popularity of such films can be partly attributed to extravagant audience expectations. As argued earlier, these expectations become continuously enlarged and, because they are continually met – and fuelled – by the blockbuster aesthetic, beget more of the same. As well as inflaming this cycle, the emphasis on spectacular computer-generated visual effects has driven up production costs (Block and Wilson, 2010 p. 705). Consequently, having initially "turn[ed]" to this style of filmmaking "as a means of economic salvation" (Wyatt, 1994 p. 78), it appears as though the strategies used by major studios has since become the standard. Indeed, Wyatt later argues that "privileg[ing] high concept as a style of mainstream filmmaking within Hollywood" ensures that the market "cannot adequately account for many other forms of production" (1994 p. 155). As conglomerates continue to grow and their financial interests become evermore precarious, the margin for error is considerably narrowed – as does their willingness to engage in "other forms" of filmmaking which may not be as financially attractive. It follows that higher budgets, driven in part by the increased use of digital technology and filmmaking techniques, entails a concurrent increase in accountability. This in turn often necessitates multi-party collaborations and an (over-)reliance on proven established franchises. As conglomeration continues apace, it appears as though such filmmaking patterns will remain firmly engrained. It seems natural, too, that massive multinational multimedia corporations will continue to pursue their primary "objective" of "deliver[ing] pumped up profits for shareholders" (Marich, 2013 p. 325). Accordingly, Paul Grainge and Catherine Johnson (2015) argue that

> [w]ith Hollywood's shifting economy, theatrical exhibition remains central, with box office success positioned by the industry as *the* indicator of a movie's marquee value, meaning its potential revenue in overseas markets […] As such, the premiere of a movie in the cinema can be understood as akin to a product launch for a larger brand (2015 p. 150; original italics).

Studio fixation with the box office is framed by wider factors challenging Hollywood, particularly the increased mobility of films and the growing influence of foreign markets (ibid). Indeed, the global box office has become particularly important as it has "accounted for almost 50 percent of the US film industry's total earnings" since the new millennium, prompting the claim that "economies of scale in the advertising and marketing of a big budget picture [are] not only desirable but essential" (Elsaesser, 2012 p. 277).

These claims are corroborated by global box office figures compiled by Tanza Loudenback and Jason Guerrasio (2018). The table below lists the top 10 highest grossing film each year from 2000 – 2009:

Film	Unadjusted Global Gross ($)	Adjusted Global Gross ($)
***Mission: Impossible II* (2000)**	546 million	791 million
***Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* (2001)**	975 million	1.4 billion

***The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers* (2002)**	923 million	1.3 billion
***The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King* (2003)**	1.12 billion	1.5 billion
***Shrek 2* (2004)**	920 miillion	1.2 billion
***Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire* (2005)**	897 million	1.14 billion
***Pirates of the Caribbean: Dead Man's Chest* (2006)**	1.07 billion	1.3 billion
***Pirates of the Caribbean: At World's End* (2007)**	963 million	1.2 billion
***The Dark Knight* (2008)**	1 billion	1.2 billion
***Avatar* (2009)**	2.78 billion	3.3 billion

Table 5.3 – Table listing globally highest-grossing films 2000 – 2009 (Source: Loudenback and Guerrasio, 2018)

High concept, serial blockbusters evidently continue to provide Hollywood studios with financial success on an international level. The figures also follow an established pattern: *Avatar* is the only film on the list which was at one time classified as a standalone feature, however James Cameron has since confirmed a pair of long-gestating sequels will follow (Keegan, 2017). Another seemingly inevitable link between the listed films is their dependence on digital visual effects, legitimising Lucas's observation that continued advances in developing such technology "allows [filmmakers] a much larger scope to tell stories" (in Kelly and Parisi, 1997).

A similar pattern is found in this decade's highest-grossing films, a list over which the shadow of Disney's corporate umbrella looms large having already acquired Pixar in 2006 (La Monica, 2006), Marvel Entertainment in 2009 (Wilkerson, 2009), Lucasfilm in 2012, and Fox in 2019 (Szalai and Bond, 2019). Brand Finance (2016) report that *Star Wars* was estimated to be worth at least $10 billion only four years after they obtained Lucasfilm (Brand Finance, 2016). Due to their financial dominance, Brand Finance (2018) has more recently claimed that "Disney is the world's strongest brand" (Brand Finance, 2018). These recent corporate acquisitions mean they are now copyright holders for 14 of the top 20 globally highest-grossing films of all time (Watson, 2019), eight of which were released in the last decade (see asterisks):

Film	Unadjusted Global Gross ($)	Adjusted Global Gross ($)
***Toy Story 3* (2010) ***	1.06 billion	1.2 billion
***Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows: Part 2* (2011)**	1.34 billion	1.5 billion
***The Avengers* (2012) ***	1.52 billion	1.7 billion
***Frozen* (2013) ***	1.28 billion	1.4 billion
***Transformers: Age of Extinction* (2014)**	1.1 billion	1.2 billion
***Star Wars: Episode VII – The Force Awakens* (2015) ***	2.07 billion	2.15 billion
***Captain America: Civil War* (2016) ***	1.15 billion	1.17 billion

***Star War: Episode VIII – The Last Jedi* (2017) ***	1.3 billion	1.3 billion
***Avengers: Infinity War* (2018) ***	2.05 billion	2.05 billion
***Avengers: Endgame* (2019) ***	2.796 billion	2.796 billion

Table 5.4– Table listing globally highest-grossing films 2010 – 2019 (Source: Loudenback and Guerrasio, 2018; McNary 2019)

Together, these accounts indicate the high likelihood that Disney will continue to dominate the global box office. Indeed, 2019 saw the release of the latest instalments in a number of their behemoth franchises, notably *Avengers: Endgame*, *Frozen 2*, *Star Wars: Episode IX*, and *Toy Story 4*, as well as remakes of animated classics including *Aladdin*, *Dumbo*, and *The Lion King*. Trends within previous top-grossing lists also signal the strong possibility that blockbuster films more generally will continue to reap unfathomable levels of box office wealth thanks to the model laid down by Lucas and Spielberg in the '70s. Disney's vertical integration and launch of their own video streaming service is indicative of wider trends within the industry as conglomerates adapt to a changing media landscape. As argued in Chapter 2, these changes have already had marked consequences for studios, forcing many to change their approach to production and distribution.

What links many of these films beyond their big-budget, high concept, franchise premises are the wider economic, industrial, and social forces acting upon them. Since the 1990s, a "threshold period when streaming video sites gained real momentum and achieved cultural visibility" (Klinger, 2006 pp. 193 – 194), the internet has become a progressively popular platform for film marketing. For Kerrigan:

> technological developments have significantly changed the nature of advertising, moving from a passive form where advertising messages were designed by companies and broadcast/projected to consumers towards interactive forms where consumers are actively engaged in promoting products and services (2010 p. 193).

A number of examples are discussed in the final section of this chapter, however on this "change of nature", Harvey affirms that "the movement from analogue approaches to digital techniques ought to be viewed as a *continuum*" (2015 p. 1). As before, rather than digital technology causing a rupture in the process, the use of paratexts in film promotion and transmedia storytelling persists – only the "ways and means" of paratexts have evolved to reflect wider societal and technological shifts.

Genette maintains that "just as the presence of paratextual elements is not uniformly obligatory, so, too, the public and the reader are not unvaryingly and uniformly obligated" (1997 p. 4). That is, even with the variations in the presence and dissemination of paratexts, the public is free to engage with them to whatever extent they deem necessary – wholly, partially, or not at all. Just as readers are not "required to read a preface" (ibid), similarly audiences are not required to engage with every ancillary text to fully enjoy a film; at least,

they should not be. While it may be relatively easy to forego reading novelisations or comic series related to a film, it has become almost impossible to avoid other less-tangible "part objects" of a film due to their cross-media omnipresence. As noted earlier, the aesthetic and generic associations linked to a name or a text is based on intertextual theory. The extent to which this affects the subsequent reading of the text thus depends on a familiarity with their work.

A trailer for *Widows* (2018) closely follows Kerrigan's template (2010 pp. 141 – 145). It acts as a "promotional tool" reminding us of Steve McQueen's pedigree as the "Academy Award Winning" director of *12 Years a Slave* (2013) in an attempt to raise expectations for *Widows* as another potentially award-winning film. It also signifies co-writer Gillian Flynn as a symbol of quality by referring to her role as the "[w]riter of" *Gone Girl* (2014) which, adapted from her bestselling novel of the same name, was equally received with positive critical acclaim. Cast members are similarly identified via surtitles indicating their eminence within the industry: Academy Award Winners Viola Davis, Robert Duvall, and Daniel Kaluuya are accompanied by Academy Award Nominee Jacki Weaver, Golden Globe winner Colin Farrell, and a number of notable actors to form an impressive ensemble who likewise elevate the cast by association with their own respective bodies of work.

The film is a loose adaptation/contemporary reimagining of the ITV series written by Lynda La Plante (1983 – 1985), whose name and success within the crime fiction genre carries its own set of expectations. It is doubtful that viewers are required to have watched this series in order to fully enjoy and follow the narrative of McQueen's film. Nevertheless, its pre-existence as a television series written by an author as distinguished as La Plante will no doubt inform the reading of the film-text by those audience members familiar with its origin. Furthermore, those elements the film borrows directly from the series, and those from the genre more broadly, will also seem familiar to discerning viewers. The premise, for example, involves a group of recently-bereaved widows of career criminals who band together with the aim of completing one last robbery. Additionally, the twist that one of the husbands managed to escape the group's fateful final job also carries over. Applying Lisa Kernan's (2004) logic to the film's identifiable generic aesthetics, the "promotional appeal" of *Widows* "rests heavily on familiarity, on the lure and comfort of the known" (2004 p. 45). Kernan goes on to proclaim that

> [t]he decision to attend, rent or buy a film is at times determined by the kind of (known) generic place we may desire to inhabit or revisit, and it is this oneiric and/or ritual aspect of moviegoing that the rhetoric of genre exploits. At the same time, the promotional category of genre is a key method by which films are effectively packaged as commodities (ibid).

In this instance, this familiarity extends beyond the recognition of conventions associated with the crime genre within which the film operates; its promotional appeal also applies to the prestigious allure of those involved with the project. Combined, these elements constitute an

effective marketing mix to commodify and sell the film to audiences as the latest project featuring the combined creative efforts of several highly-marketable, award-winning talents.

In the quote introducing this section Harvey points to the integral role played by digitally-networked platforms and the instantaneous "spread" of transmedia material they enable. As I have argued, this is largely thanks to rampant corporate conglomeration which continues to "open vast new areas for synergy and cross-promotion" (Kernan, 2004 p. 120). Fundamentally underpinned by financial motivations, film trailers have become a key tool facilitating this spread by generating widespread awareness and giving potential audience members a "taste" of what to expect in the final product (Kerrigan, 2010 p. 141). Gray posits that film trailers suffer from an embedded incongruity: "[a]s the term "preview" encapsulates, we have a paradoxical situation in which we can apparently view a text before viewing it" (2010 p. 52). The act of pre-viewing a film via a short pre-text thus offers studios the opportunity to create an audiovisual threshold through which viewers can cross. This process has become progressively protracted since the advent of television in the 1950s, at which point trailers began to grow "beyond the borders of the cinema screen" as the new medium "demonstrated the ability of the trailer format to move between visual media" (Johnston, 2008 p. 145). Once more, cinema benefits from the viewership provided by alternative media outlets thus facilitating a synergy between them.

The apparition of "contemporary transmedia networks" described by Harvey continues to facilitate the process. Social media has become an especially pivotal site for marketers due to the way in which it "deliver[s] ready-made platforms that can quickly aggregate viewers" almost instantaneously around the globe (Marich, 2013 p. 122). Indeed, a recent trend in the promotion of blockbuster films sees the announcement of an upcoming trailer, sometimes via a short teaser-trailer of its own, on social media with a specified date and time of release. For Kerrigan, teasers are particularly useful during the early stages of promotion because they

> signal that a film is coming and to begin to transmit a narrative about this film to the target audience […]. Teasers can be used effectively alongside initial promotional activities which serve to start speculation about the film and generate word of mouth (2010 p. 141).

Fledgling marketing activities may include the use of teaser images featuring the film's logo, or a first-look poster shared on social media, as well as brief interviews with the main cast and crew. A longstanding effect of the shift to TV advertising associated with the blockbuster model (Kernan, 2004 p. 120), another current trend sees the first full trailer typically airing on broadcast TV, almost invariably in the United States, and is simultaneously released online via the official social media and video streaming channels of the production company/studio involved. Following this is a prolonged promotional campaign including production updates and on-set reports from the unit publicist and photographer (Kerrigan, 2010 pp. 127 – 129),

although cast and crew members directly engage with fans to frequently offer their own content on social media, maintaining an open dialogue that is a relatively new feature of film production. A recent example demonstrating evolving promotional practices is found in the marketing for *Avengers: Infinity War*, and to a similar extent its sequel *Avengers: Endgame*.

Marvel Studios originally announced *Avengers: Infinity War – Part I* and *Part II* in October 2014 (Siegel, 2014) as a double-feature culmination of the developing narrative shared between properties within the Marvel Cinematic Universe (MCU) – an ongoing series of several inter-related multimedia franchises. Revealed well in advance of their intended cinematic releases the films were immediately subject to fervent online speculation as they promised to weave together a decade's worth of narrative strands and combine several multi-million dollar franchises in a pair of wildly ambitious ensemble blockbusters. The first of these was retitled in 2016 to *Avengers: Infinity War*, while its sequel became *Avengers: Untitled* (Donnelly, 2016). The first official footage of *Infinity War* was unveiled for attendees only at Disney's D23 event some nine months before the film's release (Alexander, 2017). Alongside a new poster, the same trailer later screened at the 2017 San Diego Comic Con (SDCC), generating over 90,000 new social media conversations (McNary, 2017), evidence that significant word-of-mouth had kept anticipation for the film alive online. Capitalising on the popularity of social media as a promotional tool, the directors began to tease fans on Twitter with a since-removed countdown to the trailer's public release. Preceded by its own short video teaser the day before, it was eventually broadcast on *Good Morning America* – on the Disney-owned ABC network – and simultaneously disseminated via the official Marvel Entertainment YouTube and social media channels in November (Rubin, 2017).

The trailer adheres to Kernan's aesthetic trailer template (2004 pp. 9 – 16) to powerful effect, using familiar tropes to provide call-backs to earlier MCU entries and offer a sense of impending doom befitting its title. For example, its "introductory address" is a solemn narration of dialogue from the first *Avengers* film accompanied by an equally sombre rendition of Alan Silvestri's originally bombastic theme. Pivotal scenes are chosen to "accentuate[] the film's surface of cinematic spectacle" and give a taste of the events to come, particularly those featuring anticipated character interactions and, naturally, action. By visually foregrounding "identifications of significant cast members or characters" these scenes also seek to exploit the star power of those appearing in the film, again based on the premise that this wide range of characters is re-teaming once again, to be joined by other major heroes. The trailer also features evidence of the "falsifications" Kernan identifies as permissible with trailer texts by featuring a heroic group shot of protagonists which does not appear in the final film. Overall, then, the trailer justifies Kernan's conclusion that "[c]ontemporary production practices […] result in high concept-oriented trailers that frequently synthesize appeals to genre, story and stardom in broad strokes, delivering finely crafted yet apparently simple trailers" (2004 p. 164). That the short preview went on to become the most-viewed trailer of all-time in a 24 hour period – recording 230 million views

across social media according to Marvel's own records (Marvel Studios, 2017) – is testament to its "finely crafted" nature which fulfils the appeals identified above.

The release and reception of this trailer mirrors in some ways the distribution of the trailer for *The Phantom Menace*. Like *Infinity War*, the first of Lucas's *Star Wars* prequels added to an established franchise which similarly generated comparable levels of excitement and hype for a long-running series. Keith M. Johnston (2008) recounts how promotion for *Episode I* began in 1998 as Lucasfilm made use of the burgeoning Internet medium to release a series of production documentaries on their official website (2008 p. 147). While Marvel Studios used entertainment expos to reveal new footage, limiting viewership to attendees only, Lucasfilm attached their trailer as a preview initially only available to view in cinemas. As depicted in *Starwoids* (2001) this prompted a large number of dedicated fans to pay entry into cinemas only to watch the trailer, a large number of whom would then upload it to fan forums and message boards. This leads Johnston to conclude that "[t]he *Episode I* teaser represents not only the first use of the internet for trailer dissemination, but also how new digital technologies allowed online fan audiences to partially commandeer and interact with a trailer text" (ibid).

Contradicting the notoriously hard-line behaviour explored in the previous chapter that saw Lucasfilm relentlessly persecute those infringing upon their copyrighted material, there are no indications that the company attempted to remove these unsanctioned uploads. Furthermore, that they took four days to upload the teaser on their official website invites questioning: did Lucasfilm want to simply build anticipation for the film, like the Russos and their Twitter countdown? Or does this reflect a corporate lack of engagement with the new medium? Regardless, the ensuing online traffic demonstrates the considerably high level of expectation for the film. As Johnston describes:

> 450 *Star Wars* fans per second attempted to download the trailer from the official site, over 200,000 in 48 hours, an estimated 1.5 million downloads in the first week, rising to an estimated 3.5 million in total: shattering all previous internet download records (2008 pp. 147 – 148).

While these figures may pale in comparison to those made by *Infinity War* it must be noted that this activity occurred in the days before social media and the widespread adoption of Internet-based video sharing platforms. Of importance, too, is that the figures come from official records provided by the studios responsible: Johnston's account, for example, neglects downloads made from unofficial websites and those provided by Marvel Studios only cover views made on their sanctioned outlets. The trailer for *The Phantom Menace* thus acts as a useful benchmark to identify the increasing role such platforms play in the circulation of digital media paratexts. As a precursor to contemporary promotional campaigns identified by Kerrigan (2010 pp. 200 – 202), Johnston contends that

> [t]he act of moving the trailer out of the cinema and onto the internet […] freed the trailer from the programme structure: viewers could choose to watch the trailer whenever they wanted, rather than as part of a theatrical or television schedule dictated by production companies, distributors, and cinema chains (2008 p. 148).

Thanks to the development of sophisticated digital infrastructure enabling instantaneous video streaming and sharing on the move, film trailers can now be watched anywhere and at any time. Interestingly, this also causes a heightened sense of intimacy between viewer and content as they pore over the pre-text, pausing and rewatching sections in order to pick up on any details they missed on initial viewings (Johnston, 2008 p. 146). As argued earlier, the increased mobility of content has been one of the core challenges faced by cinema in the contemporary media climate as we can now watch what we want whenever we want to, and on any number of devices available to us.

While the audiovisual pre-texts for *Infinity War* debuted on traditional media during scheduled live broadcasts, their simultaneous Internet release demonstrates the contemporary "freeing-up" of the film trailer. At the same time, this decision also represents a prudent move to both offset the potential of any unofficial third-party uploads, as well as an attempt to capitalise on the power of social media. For example, a second preview aired as a 30-second television spot during Superbowl LII on February 4th 2018, a longstanding ploy given the guaranteed large viewership at this annual event (Marich, 2013 pp. 25 – 27), which produced considerable online chatter (McClintock, 2018a). A second two-minute trailer followed in March which went on to become the third most-watched trailer in a 24-hour period and the most-watched second trailer of all time (McClintock, 2018b). At the film's premiere in April, Marvel Studios continued to employ social media as a promotional outlet by filming and disseminating a range of red carpet interviews with MCU affiliates. The traffic generated by these trailers seems to support Johnston's claim that "[t]he ability of online trailers to target and retain such a fan audience […] has been a factor in the resurgence of interest in trailer releases" (2008 p. 151). This is particularly applicable to the first trailer released for *Endgame*. As reported by Graeme McMillan (2018b), in the run up to its release the trailer was surrounded by "fevered anticipation" which was, for the most part, "fan-created, without noticeable direction from Marvel or the filmmakers involved" (ibid). This leads him to argue that Marvel Studios should thus refrain from releasing a trailer at all as the fan-generated hype is a significant promotional tool in and of itself, with constant speculation and social media buzz sustaining anticipation for the film.

Despite McMillan's seemingly counter-intuitive marketing strategy a trailer was subsequently unveiled. Rather than offer a countdown, the Russo brothers instead began to tease fans on Twitter with two posts relating to the film (2018a; 2018b). In December 2018 Marvel Studios eventually shared the first trailer which revealed its new title to be *Avengers: Endgame* (Tuitt, 2018). This preview shares many elements with the *Infinity War* trailer

identified above, including a downbeat narration throughout dealing with the after-effects of the previous film and the appearance of significant characters. Again creating considerable online traffic (Spangler, 2018) the trailer saw Marvel Studios break their own record by generating 289 million views in the 24 hours after its appearance online, prompting them to once again thank fans for their support (Marvel Entertainment, 2018). Its second trailer premiered in March, falling victim to Marvel Studios' own lofty standards to become the second most-watched second trailer of all time in 24 hours (Martinez, 2019).

The social media campaigns cited above represent a single, albeit substantial, part of the much broader tapestry used to publicise the films in question and the MCU as a whole. As a Disney-owned subsidiary Marvel Studios seems to have somewhat inevitably employed the market saturation techniques associated with the so-called House of Mouse (see Gray, 2010 pp. 38 – 39). In addition to this key elements of the marketing mix identified by Kerrigan were used to sell both films equally effectively: the ensemble cast of star and non-star actors ensured a large section of fans would be catered for by the presence of a wide range of familiar characters; the re-teaming of directors Anthony and Joe Russo with writers Christopher Markus and Stephen McFeely ensured a level of continuity based on the quartet's previous MCU instalments; the story itself, inspired by comic-based source material, promised a high stakes story which pledged a pay-off for fans of the MCU; the inherent generic branding as superhero films continuing an established overarching narrative was emphasised to appeal to fans of the cinematic and comic universes alike. By not featuring extensive explicit content its age classification – PG-13 in the US, 12A in the UK – likewise ensured a large viewership was possible and avoided alienating a key audience demographic.

Finally, the release schedule for *Infinity War* ensured considerable success. Originally intended for release at the beginning of the Labor Day holiday weekend on May 4th 2018 its US premiere was brought forward by a week, aligning it with the global release schedule. As reported by Anthony Breznican (2018) this announcement was, fittingly, made via Twitter and gave the film an extra week to increase box office revenue: it made $640.5 million worldwide on its opening weekend (D'Alessandro, 2018b) to become the fastest film to surpass $1 billion globally, taking just 11 days (McClintock, 2018c), and it remains the fifth top-grossing film of all time as of August 2019 (Watson, 2019). *Endgame*, too, would break numerous financial records to become the highest-grossing film of all time (Rubin, 2019; Tartaglione, 2019). These figures support the claims made above by Johnston as well as those purported by Salma Karray and Lidia Debernitz (2017) who argue that trailers as "costly and important influencers of movie selection behaviours […] can greatly impact the success of the film at the box office" (2017 pp. 368 – 369).

> ***Star Wars is, in many ways, the prime example of media convergence at work. Lucas’s decision to defer salary for the first Star Wars film in favor of maintaining a share of ancillary profits has been widely cited as a turning point in the emergence of this new strategy of media production and distribution***
>
> (Jenkins, 2006 p. 149)

Although *Star Wars* was not the first media text to employ the use of paratextual material in an attempt to either prolong the lifespan of the brand or promote the core film, it would be more accurate to describe it as a “turning point” in the history of film marketing. By placing promotional material, particularly toys, at the heart of his strategy for financial independence, George Lucas replicated strategies used in the *Jaws* promotional campaign to inadvertently revitalise the practice of tie-in merchandise – demonstrating to studios the value of alternative monetary revenue streams to complement box office takings. The use of ancillary media texts which could be sold around the world also illustrated the potential of expanding a franchise, both its narrative and its brand, beyond the original text. As mentioned earlier, the SWEU saw characters from the original film series undertake new adventures in a wide range of loosely-related texts, predominantly novel trilogies (Liptak, 2015a). However, a concerted effort to implement a more coherent, transmedia narrative began in 1996 with the release of multimedia project *Star Wars: Shadows of the Empire* (Liptak, 2015b). In addition to the obligatory action figures, art pieces, trading cards, and other collectable paraphernalia, a carefully constructed narrative unfolds over a number of novels, comic books, and a videogame (Lamping, 2005).

The Lucasfilm story group continues to fill-in narrative gaps since the Disney acquisition, growing the universe outside of the main film series. The events of aforementioned animated series *Star Wars: Rebels*, for example, see characters and locations from the original films reappear in a reimagined context. The once-dormant *The Clone Wars* animated series was revived for a final series released on Disney+ (Brooks, 2018) and will be accompanied by at least one live-action series, *The Mandalorian* (2019 –), with more in development (D’Alessandro, 2018c). A wide range of books, comic series, junior novels, novelisations, and spin-off novels also sustain the transcendence of the brand beyond the cinema screen to enable multimedia crossovers which all feed into the new series *urtext*. Inspired by the “It’s all connected” mantra associated with the MCU, first uttered by then Head of Marvel Television Jeph Loeb (quoted in Hibberd, 2014), this final section uses *Shadows of the Empire*, and the wider SWEU, as a touchstone to demonstrate its influence in subsequent transmedia franchises. By applying themes and concepts introduced earlier I will investigate to what extent these projects can be deemed successful, what makes them unique, and how their curation has been impacted by technology and competing creative visions.

Great emphasis has been placed on paratexts as advertising tools, but they also present creators, marketers, and studios with new creative opportunities to exploit alternative delivery platforms and engage in transmedia storytelling. As well as allowing a text to transcend its medium of origin, this helps to widen the potential narrative scope and spread of the franchise. Offering a wide range of paratextual thresholds means that the potential fan base is also increased, as would-be consumers have more than one way of encountering the world presented in the core text. For example, fans of videogame *Dead Space* (2008) might be inspired to read the accompanying comic series and novels, or watch the animated films occurring within the same fictional continuity. They may also be interested in playing one or more of the subsequent videogame instalments. Likewise, players of *The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt* (2015) might be motivated to seek out the novels written by Andrzej Sapkowski – upon which the game is loosely based – in order to better understand the overarching narrative elements, or vice-versa, while viewers of the Netflix series might also seek to gain familiarity with the universe in a similar manner. However, as acknowledged above, consumers of a text are not obligated to cross the threshold of these auxiliary paratexts. So, while further consumption in the form of playing, reading, and watching undoubtedly serve to enrich the subject's appreciation of the in-series lore, their engagement with a chosen, singular text is not dependent upon these ancillary materials.

Consequently, an intricate transmedia project relying on substantial audience investment across several interconnected narrative elements may fail if commitment is lacking. Henry Jenkins (2006) applies this realisation to the dystopian *The Matrix* universe curated by The Wachowskis, arguing that "[n]o film franchise has ever made such demands on its consumers" (2006 p. 96). The series began with the release of the original film in 1999 and, like Lucas, The Wachowskis had envisioned the use of ancillary paratexts from the beginning (Jenkins, 2006 pp. 103 – 104). As a result, the ensuing series evolved in a similar manner to Lucasfilm's *Shadows of the Empire* project: *The Matrix* spawned a tightly-knit narrative linking the core text – contained in a trilogy of live action films, to be followed by another imminent instalment (Glynn, 2019) – with animated anthology film *The Animatrix* (2003), several video games, and a substantial collection of comics, all overseen by the pair in a process of "[c]ollaborative [a]uthorship […] with people they admired" (Jenkins, 2006 pp.110 – 111). This ensured The Wachowskis retained a significant amount of control over the dense multimedia narrative and guaranteed that each text served a direct purpose within the overall story. As Jenkins notes, however, "[t]his is probably where *The Matrix* fell out of favor with the film critics, who were used to reviewing the film and not the surrounding apparatus" (2006 p. 106). This would apply, too, to casual filmgoers who had only watched the films in cinemas. Indeed, because "[f]ew of them, consumed the games or comics or animated shorts […] few absorbed the essential information they contained" (ibid). While the series may retrospectively act as a pioneering case study of the transmedia event, its very reliance on ancillary texts ultimately resulted in the negative attention directed towards it.

Arguably a victim of the period in which it was released, when sophisticated digital infrastructure and ease of media access online remained relatively limited, *The Matrix* was pioneering in its application of tightly-knit transmedia storytelling.

Usefully, though, its model has since been adapted by other franchises taking a similar approach, for example the MCU. Beginning with Jon Favreau's *Iron Man* (2008), the MCU has grown exponentially under the stewardship of producer Kevin Feige. It now includes over 20 blockbuster films, with many more on the way, and several related television series originally broadcast on a number of networks – predominantly Disney's own ABC. Increasingly, however, alternative delivery methods have been sought as parent company Disney seeks to diversify its output and capitalise on the growing video on demand (VOD) market while retaining control over the broadcast of its content. For example, a partnership with Netflix has seen the release of six series on the platform while two others, *Runaways* (2017 – present) and *Cloak & Dagger* (2018 – present), debuted on Hulu and Freeform respectively – the former being majority-owned by Disney, while the latter is a wholly-owned Disney subsidiary. These preceded a recent move towards consolidation which has seen Feige assume control over television content relating to the MCU, as Marvel Television properties have been folded into Marvel Studios (Patten and Andreeva, 2019). With the arrival of their own streaming service, it seems evident that the company want to replicate their big screen success by becoming a dominant force in this market. Nevertheless, ensuring that the main theatrical film series remains the anchor of the growing transmedia narrative, this strategy "sp[eaks] to the continued centrality of film in converged media economies" (Johnson, 2012).

Early attempts at this were made with two web-series released on YouTube. *WHIH Newsfront* (2015 – 2016) featured fabricated news reports from the fictional WHIH World News organisation that appears repeatedly throughout properties existing in the MCU. Released in two waves, to first promote *Ant-Man* (2015) and then *Captain America: Civil War*, the videos provide a novel way of delivering exposition to audiences and offer in-universe updates on current affairs involving characters familiar to viewers (Lesnick, 2016). These were supplemented by posts on the faux WHIH social media channels in an effort to broaden the reach of the content and blur the lines between fiction and reality. *Agents of S.H.I.E.L.D.: Slingshot* (2016) followed this, a miniseries released in its entirety during the series four mid-season break of parent program *Agents of S.H.I.E.L.D.* (2013 –). *Slingshot* acted as a prequel narrative, developing the story of new recruit Elena "Yo-Yo" Rodriguez while featuring many characters from the main series. Like the WHIH news reports, this is another unique way to develop events in-universe without necessarily requiring complete audience investment.

More recently, efforts have been made to introduce format-specific paratexts encouraging fans to buy certain versions of MCU releases. Notably, the digital version of *Infinity War* was accompanied by a directors' roundtable unavailable on physical releases,

while the more expensive Blu-ray editions frequently contain more special features than the standard DVD disc. For example, a number of films released between 2011 – 2013 feature so-called “one-shots” – smaller-scale short films which often develop secondary characters and unresolved plot threads – contained on the Blu-ray versions only. This can be seen as a reaction to the narrowing of release windows which has been directly facilitated by the digital turn – particularly the practice of releasing digital downloads before their appearance on physical media. This trend is illustrative of a claim made by James N. Gilmore (2017) that paratexts have begun to “expand[] well beyond the materiality of the DVD disc” thanks to what he describes as “[t]he increasing complexity of media circulation” (2017 p. 253). Indeed, the global reach of social media means that companies can now release paratexts online, ensuring their reach extends beyond traditional disc-bound extremes. The same can be applied to the *Cloverfield* franchise which featured the novel use of covert online marketing techniques to raise awareness (Kerrigan, 2010 pp. 201 – 202). Again, this constitutes a substantial effort to widen the scope of not only the original texts but the franchise brand-narrative as a whole by engaging viewers in as many ways as possible.

Julia Alexander (2018) reports that Marvel Studios has benefited enormously from unintended online promotion in the dialogue between fans and producers, largely thanks to social media. In the aftermath of *Infinity War*, which saw half the global population dematerialise due to the actions of the film’s antagonist Thanos, reddit users created a page dedicated to the character and his misguided motivations for worldwide genocide. Subscribers to this page then requested that half should be banned, attempting to mirror the events of the film’s climax. Josh Brolin (Thanos) was subsequently recruited to re-enact the fatal actions of his character, resulting in half of these randomly-chosen users being banned, before they would go on to create a new page reflecting their “chosen” status (Alexander, 2018). As well as providing the MCU with free publicity this example also acts as a contemporary exception to Fabrice Lyczba’s earlier claim concerning the shift away from ballyhoo film promotion. Furthermore, it also acts as a powerful demonstration of Marvel Studios’ desire to “construct[] its cinematic brand” as a studio willing to engage with their fans in a meaningful manner (Gilmore, 2017 p. 249).

Other franchises have attempted to capture a similar level of success by blending new and established approaches. The divergent future first introduced in Ridley Scott’s seminal sci-fi classic *Alien* (1979) is no stranger to narrative expansion via transmedia storytelling. It was followed onscreen by three sequels – James Cameron’s *Aliens* (1986), David Fincher’s *Alien 3* (1992) and *Alien Resurrection* (1997) directed by Jean-Pierre Jeunet – as well as a short-lived crossover series with *Predator* (2004 – 2007). Scott would return to the franchise with two prequels, *Prometheus* (2012) and *Alien: Covenant* (2017), which promised audiences an expansion of *Alien* lore by delving into the history of the Xenomorph and Space Jockey species central to the series. Like *Star Wars*, the early entries attempted to transcend cinema screens via physical media: tie-in videogames, novelisations, and comic

series including those produced by Dark Horse Comics – some of which have themselves been re-adapted to complicate canon established in the main film narrative (Bishop, 2016). This lack of authorial oversight and unified creative vision contrasts strongly with the *Shadows of the Empire* and *The Matrix* examples described above, both of which benefited greatly from a singular approach leading to their coherent application.

As internet infrastructure and technology has improved, later instalments have attempted to innovatively combine film promotion and narrative development in the same package. *Prometheus* and *Alien: Covenant* both seek to engage audiences in more contemporary transmedia campaigns featuring elements as described by Kerrigan (2010 pp. 193 – 209). Like Jenkins et al, Kerrigan argues that "[o]nline and viral marketing campaigns are now as important as the conventional practices" (2010 p. 200). What is also important to note is that these campaigns involved considerably more oversight and planning than the overwhelmingly fan-driven publicity in response to *Infinity War* despite it, too, demonstrating the importance of viral content.

Marketing for *Prometheus* particularly attempted to, in Boorstin's terms, fulfil our extravagant expectations as it blurred the lines between fiction and reality. This began in earnest with the release of a faux TED talk featuring Peter Weyland, founder of the fictional Weyland Corp. underpinning the series, which meticulously imitated the aesthetic conventions of a real-world TED symposium. This was accompanied by a purpose-built Weyland-branded website replete with interactive puzzles and prompts unveiling hidden content to visitors. Now unavailable, the website presented itself as a relatively standard institutional site like that used to promote the final book in Chuck Hogan and Guillermo del Toro's *The Strain* trilogy:

> Using the informational aesthetic and charity vernacular, with minimal indication of the site's fictional status, (apart from the reader's prior knowledge and understanding of the book), the *Strain* project exemplifies the seamless merging of fiction into reality, and emergent strategies of extended fictional practices which are played out within discourses of reality in authenticity (Atkinson, 2014 p. 21).

The Weyland Corp. site similarly borrowed corporate, professional "vernacular" to present itself as genuine, however it likewise relied on audience familiarity with the Weyland insignia to ensure that it wasn't mistaken for a real organisation.

In addition, strategically placed advertisements for a particular brand of android featured in the film borrowed a similar aesthetic to once more blur the boundaries between our universe and that presented in the film (Warren, 2012a). In the UK a print advertisement was used to announce an upcoming trailer premiere on Channel 4 as a "television event" (Grainge and Johnson, 2015 p. 55). That the trailer "invited viewers to share their thoughts on Twitter using the hashtag #areyouseeingthis" generated an identifiably modern-day pseudo-event, leading the pair to conclude that "[t]he case of *Prometheus* is indicative of

changes in contemporary film and television marketing, specifically the way that digital media technologies are used to amplify promotional campaigns" (ibid). Social media would continue to be a pivotal tool as part of a strategic partnership with Verizon, who would release several videos featuring characters from the film on their Facebook page as a way to introduce them to audiences before the film's release (Warren, 2012b). Furthermore, an official Twitter account provided fans with the opportunity to interact with the film's writer, Damon Lindelof, while the premiere was livestreamed from the red carpet via Verizon's Facebook page (ibid).

Its sequel *Alien: Covenant* relied heavily on social media and a number of strategic corporate alliances. Kyle O'Brien (2017) describes how a short video created in collaboration with tech company AMD advertised a new generation of android, replacing the print alternative used for *Prometheus* (O'Brien, 2017). Another partnership featured the use of an Audi lunar rover as Fox sought to implement product placement by prominently featuring the Audi brand (McCarthy, 2017a). Alongside the earlier alliance with Verizon, these authenticate Marich's claim that "[t]he tie-in promotion and product placement fields are becoming increasingly sophisticated as movie marketers and their consumer-goods partners expand the scope of their alliances" (2013 p. 147). Alongside these strategic corporate unions was the distribution of several diary video-logs and crew photographs as a means to once more introduce and develop the backstory of the new cast of characters (McCarthy, 2017b). The studio once again exploited social media by creating personalised countdown alerts for Twitter users who retweeted a tweet on the film's promotional feed (ibid). Arguably the most inventive feature of this advertising campaign was the creation of a tailor-made virtual reality (VR) "experience" (Technicolor, n.d.) called *Alien: Covenant in Utero* (2017). This short VR film is a first-person experience of a Xenomorph being born and was made available for use with several smart devices requiring VR-enabled tech, representing a significant shift in immersive experiences from those pioneered by William Castle.

Another formative sci-fi franchise established on the screen by Ridley Scott is the stylised neo-noir future depicted in *Blade Runner* (1982). Inspired by Philip K. Dick's *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* (1968) the film reflects upon humanity and the human condition in a speculative future in which we coexist with replicants – androids bioengineered by the fictitious Tyrell Corporation designed to work in dangerous off-world colonies for the benefit of human advancement. As with any adaptation, regardless of fidelity, *Blade Runner* is, like *Widows* and *The Witcher 3*, inherently and symbiotically tied to its source material via intertextual bonds. Consequently the film exists as a paratext to the novel and vice versa, however unfamiliarity with one does not preclude the enjoyment of the other. The film's producers, the Ladd Company, made the decision was to release a novelisation of the film and approached Dick himself. Citing artistic integrity Dick admitted that he was reluctant to do so, asserting in a 1982 interview that "for me to derail myself and do that cheapo novelisation […] would have probably been disastrous to me artistically" (Boonstra, 1982).

Although a novelisation written by Les Martin (1982) was later released Dick would here cite a “victory […] of theoretical principles” by successfully witnessing the re-release of his original novel (ibid), albeit with a redesigned cover featuring the film’s poster to tie-in with the film. That Dick would refuse to essentially cash-in by lending his name to the novelisation speaks volumes to his concerns about the commodification of his work, particularly given the potentially lucrative financial returns. Furthermore, the author’s comments not only outline the longstanding tension between art and commerce; they also point towards the difficulty in adapting a story across media. Indeed, due to apparent inconsistencies arising between his original novel and the film a series of sequel novels authored by K.W. Jeter were released with the aim of resolving these and expanding upon the story of protagonist Rick Deckard. Similar authorial tension between the creative team and the producers also resulted in several versions of the film repurposed for release to the public, as chronicled extensively by Paul M. Sammon (2017).

Following Dick’s death *Blade Runner* would be adapted again in comic book form by Archie Goodwin (1982) as part of the Marvel Comics *Super Special* series released between 1977 and 1986. This was followed by two eponymously-titled videogames, first in 1985 and later in 1997, before the next cinematic instalment arrived in the form of Denis Villeneuve’s *Blade Runner 2049* (2017). In between, however, an attempt was made to link the film with *Soldier* (1998). The film’s writer, David Peoples, also co-wrote *Blade Runner* and maintains that *Soldier* is a “sidequel” which exists in the same timeline as Scott’s film and features some notable references to it (quoted in Sammon, 2017 pp. 434 – 435). Scott has himself attempted to link *Blade Runner* to the *Alien* franchise via a special feature included on the home media release of *Prometheus* (Walkuski, 2012). This takes the form of a letter written by Peter Weyland, in which Weyland describes his one-time mentor and his influence upon him – with it being strongly implied that this mentor was Eldon Tyrell, once CEO of the Tyrell Corporation. Additionally, a character biography displayed in sequel *Aliens* reveals that Arthur Dallas worked for the same corporation.

Villeneuve’s sequel mirrors *The Matrix* project in that it has been accompanied by a vigorous attempt to expand the universe. It was preceded by three short films which were later included on the Blu-ray. These shorts occur at various points in the 30 year period between original and sequel, chronologically depicting important historical events impacting the story of *2049*: *2022: Blackout* shows the EMP blast which erases the Tyrell Corporations database, a significant plot point in *2049*; *2036: Nexus Dawn* introduces Niander Wallace and his new line of replicants which have replaced the Tyrell Corporation and their inferior machines; lastly *2048: Nowhere to Run* features the character Sapper Morton and expands upon his backstory by showing viewers what fuelled his self-imposed exile. Despite enriching the world and providing historical context these films are not required viewing in order to fully follow Villeneuve’s film. Nevertheless they are, in Gray’s terms, elevated by being framed with an introduction by the director who, like The Wachowskis, claims that he admires each

artist and considers Luke Scott in particular – son of Ridley and director of *2036* and *2048* – his "friend". This lends each with a sense of heightened authenticity and legitimises their existence as supplementary paratexts. While future film instalments are yet to be confirmed, transmedia narrative expansion will continue in the form of a comic series with the involvement of Titan Comics and the film's co-writer Michael Green (McMillan, 2018a). This is an arguably more exciting development than the pre-release corporate collaboration with Johnnie Walker which saw the creation of *Black Label The Director's Cut*, a limited edition whiskey whose title pays homage to the myriad competing cuts of the original film.

5.5 – Conclusion

> ***DVD and Blu-ray are no longer going to be the future mainstays of paratextual excess and access, instead there is an emerging trend of all content relating to a film being delivered as a simultaneous shift***
>
> (Atkinson, 2014 p. 83)

From the early days of staged ballyhoo pseudo-events to the gimmicks and exhibition strategies of William Castle et al mid-century; towards the development of a merchandise-oriented blockbuster model and the rise of the Internet and digital platforms enabling new ways to engage audiences, this chapter has shown that paratexts have played a crucial and varied role in the history of film promotion in a number of ways. While beginning as a means to sell the *experience* of watching a film on the big screen, paratexts began to play a larger role in the commodification and selling of the film itself and the brand surrounding it. These economic motives undoubtedly persist, thanks to continued conglomeration, but I would suggest here that another element is at play. As it becomes progressively difficult to attract and sustain a dedicated following in the increasingly crowded media landscape, paratexts enable studios to combat audience fragmentation by exploiting new content delivery methods to ensure that we are constantly englobed by the latest ancillary text they have to offer.

While Atkinson suggests above that the significance of DVD and Blu-ray may have decreased in importance, the release of material related to a film will continue in other avenues, particularly those enabled by digital technology. Indicative of this shift towards new digital media is the growing presence of material online supplementing traditional alternatives, particularly AR and VR content relying on sophisticated new technology. Even the now-standard promotional website has evolved to become significantly more interactive than early attempts in the 1990s, again thanks to the continued development of digital infrastructure and internet-based technology. Testament to this are examples described earlier, such as *A Field in* England (2013) which premiered in cinemas, was broadcast on television, and was made available on digital VOD platforms and physical media on the same day and was accompanied by a detailed production website. A supposed pioneer of

this “emerging trend” of content release, this strategy has yet to make a widespread impact and be universally adopted. At the same time, however, examples provided throughout this chapter illustrate how clear shifts have occurred. *The Cloverfield Paradox* (2018), too, represents an equally novel approach to contemporary film releases, having been made available for viewing immediately after a trailer aired during Superbowl LII (D’Alessandro, 2018a).

As such, it clashes with Kerrigan’s model: it was not accompanied by the same level of paratextual material as many modern Hollywood-backed productions, much less that supporting *A Field in England*, owing both to its secretive nature as well as production difficulties. It does, rather, exhibit characteristics of new distribution methods, supporting both Atkinson’s above model and Iordanova’s process of disintermediation, as analysed in Chapter 2, owing to Paramount’s role as distributor being excised in favour of a direct release on Netflix. Like cinema, then, the paratext will not disappear. Instead, its means of existence will simply evolve to match the economic and industrial forces acting upon the production of its contents.

Conclusion

> ***[T]he emergence of digital technology has been noted as "revolutionary." For this to be true, the essence of how and why movies are made would need to have been changed. This hasn't happened. The ball that represents the kinds of tools we use has merely been pushed a bit farther up the field***
>
> (Crudo, 2013 p. xi)

Change is inevitable and it has guided the flow of this thesis. I have demonstrated throughout that the evolution of cinema has been driven in large part by technological advancement. Chapter 2 in particular reveals that its long-gestating process of self-discovery has been interspersed with, and shaped by, moments of considerable upheaval. While often inextricably tied to the technical foundation of the medium, these changes have been accompanied by other salient economic, legislative, and social factors which have significantly affected the growth of cinema since its nascence. These incremental evolutionary steps have often engendered great apprehension, fear, and trepidation for those involved. And at each historical juncture, fervent scepticism has prompted repeated proclamations of the death of cinema. Nevertheless, the industry has repeatedly and successfully adapted to overcome these difficulties and emerge relatively unscathed ahead of its next transformative step. And, although these debates and feelings appear to have intensified in discourse coinciding with the digital turn, the medium persists – justifying Crudo's above maxim.

The first aim of the thesis was to understand why digitisation has generated such vociferous discussion about the future of cinema, and why it appears to be different from previous instances of comparable turbulence. In order to do this I constructed a historical framework within which I reappraised the development of the medium at significant developmental stages. This historiographic approach uncovered an overarching narrative which underpins much of the current demonisation of the digital turn. Indeed, the evidence presented in Chapter 2 reveals that the industry has itself always harboured a deeply-rooted unease towards change, both from external and internal sources. As I have shown, this anxiety became particularly evident at key moments involving the introduction of new technology and legislation, as well as periods of wider economic and social mutation.

With the benefit of hindsight it is easy to recognise how these apparently isolated events combined with each other to form a coherent thread which, if followed, traces the course of the medium's evolution. This process, subsequently dubbed technical continuation, not only illustrates the iterative technological development of cinema; it also enables us to see the interplay between art, commerce, and technology – and the corresponding tension between the three – which rests at its heart. That is to say, given the material examined in Chapter 2, clear links can be drawn between artistic endeavour, economic feasibility, and

technological capability. History shows that the work of pioneering filmmakers was driven by the tools available to them, whose sophistication relied on economic investment, often from corporate backers. It is for this reason that competition between interested parties propelled cinema's primordial period and sowed the seeds for the large-scale cooperation and conglomeration we continue to witness. Ultimately, this allows me to assert that although the influence of individuals such as Edison, the Lumière Brothers, and, of course, George Lucas, cannot be understated, one must not forget the circumstances within which each worked.

I was also able to consider the wide-ranging philosophical and practical implications of digitisation with the aid of several case studies. As noted, earlier milestones formed the ongoing process of technical continuation and were predominantly associated with the improvement of cinematic apparatus. Naturally, digitisation finds its roots in this process; however, it is clear that its effects have not been constrained to the film industry. Of course, the production-cycle of films has been redefined, with distribution and exhibition two key stages having changed dramatically since the new millennium – not to mention how material is captured, edited, and refined in post-production. Nevertheless, digitisation within the film industry is symptomatic of a global transition into the digital age which has touched almost every aspect of modern life.

Furthermore, while some commonalities exist with earlier transitions, my contributions reveal that several issues have arisen from, and are uniquely associated with, digitisation. Digital distribution, disintermediation, and the sustained menace of piracy continue to erode the role of industry-backed gatekeepers. Alternative content providers, the growth of online streaming platforms, and video on-demand services also pose a considerable challenge for traditional media outlets and threaten the once assured hegemonic supremacy of cinema-going. At the same time, the proliferation of studio-backed initiatives indicates a somewhat delayed corporate-driven need to adapt in the face of changing consumer behaviour. Coupled with the increasing financial pressures of conglomeration the future remains uncertain, but not entirely downcast. As the examples discussed in the final section of this chapter show, cinema continues to thrive and the allure of communal viewing has spawned a variety of alternative approaches to theatrical exhibition. As the techniques and tools underpinning the industry continue to change, it will ultimately be left to future scholars to decide more conclusively how revolutionary the digital turn has been.

My second objective was to reappraise the role of George Lucas as a pioneer of the digital revolution and his wider influence on the industry. Chapter 3 uses the Great Man Theory to acknowledge that, while Lucas undoubtedly remains an influential figure in cinema history, his ability to reshape it was greatly aided by several interlinked factors – not to mention the important contributions of other collaborators. For instance, his emergence during Hollywood's New Wave meant that he broke into the industry at a time when directors were afforded considerable creative control and freedom. Moreover, the timing and financial

success of *Star Wars*, only his third feature film, both reinvigorated an ailing studio system and afforded him substantial clout. Significantly, this also served to dominate subsequent analyses of his legacy preoccupied with his implementation of the blockbuster filmmaking model.

Although Lucas's experiences during this time would be mixed, they would profoundly affect the trajectory of his subsequent career; Lucas was able to escalate his attempts to overhaul the filmmaking process at his own production company. This required collaborating with a number of individuals at Lucasfilm in order to research and develop the tools necessary to, as he saw it, make it easier to make films. Indeed, while other advocates of digital filmmaking technology have had varying success on changing the industry, it is the fortunate timing of Lucas's work which makes him such an important subject of study – this in addition to his engrossing musings on the artistic and technological aspects of film. The chapter made extensive use of first-hand accounts with the director, most notably his 1988 senate hearing testimonies, to engage with wider philosophical debates in film theory. In channelling the decades-long dichotomy between art, commerce, and technology, I would argue that Lucas presciently synthesises many of the concerns currently being debated in commercial and critical discourse on the effects of digitisation.

At the same time, reconciling his predictions with his artistic sensibilities creates a complex picture, perhaps mirroring a wider social consciousness. While some welcome the fact that it has become relatively easy for third-parties to appropriate and transform copyrighted intellectual property far beyond the intent of the original creator, ultimately, this means that rigid power hierarchies and legislative structures must quickly adapt if they are to remain relevant. Furthermore, Lucas's revisionist tendencies exhibited in the re-releases of the original *Star Wars* films raise considerable questions for artistic legitimacy in the digital age – not least challenging remembered history. To channel Benjamin once more, it is therefore in our best interests to preserve this history as best we can if we truly wish to ensure this integrity remains intact.

The intent of Chapter 4 was to engage with the theme of technological evolution tied to digitisation and examine how this has facilitated the democratisation of filmmaking, a key aim of Lucas's digital cinema agenda. As before, I took a historiographic approach to provide an overview of amateur filmmaking since the beginning of the 20th century. With the use of Bourdieu's field relations theory and a growing body of work revaluating the significance of amateur filmmaking, I was able to challenge its long-held perception as a frivolous novelty. This process also revealed how the media and a professional elite were able to leverage hierarchical social structures to create and maintain seemingly unattainable standards for those wishing to engage in the craft, ensuring that their work remained superior in comparison.

Charting the development of amateur filmmaking against an established backdrop of technical continuation has allowed me to reflect upon how these established power

structures have been gradually forced to adapt as filmmaking technology became more accessible – particularly since the beginning of the digital turn. Not only have the advances associated with digitisation brought an increased visibility to amateur production, the rise of a creative digital culture has also had a profound impact on the relationship between producers and consumers. As opposed to a revolutionary deconstruction of the established production-reception cycle, there has instead been continuity with that has gone before. This is not to say, however, that the equilibrium remains totally unchanged. Indeed, although a level of democratisation has taken place, the evidence in this chapter suggests that this has been uneven across the globe. Furthermore, it appears as though hierarchical structures have been replicated in emerging platforms leaving us with a multi-tiered scale of amateur-professionalism. It remains to be seen what the future holds for such relationships and so further study in this area would be beneficial going forward.

The chapter also explored the themes of appropriation, copyright, and the right of free play with intellectual property. Beginning with fan fiction, my analysis naturally turned to fan filmmaking as a sub-category of amateur production. I carried out a comparative analysis of case studies and maintained a strong Lucas-centric link by discussing amateur films predominantly appropriating copyrighted Lucasfilm material. This provided a clear focal point in the overarching discussion. I was able to analyse the company's reaction to a changing media landscape in greater scrutiny and use their policies as indicative of the challenges faced by similar organisations – for example authorship, copyright infringement, and piracy.

The final chapter addressed how the presence of paratextual material has changed since the digital turn, including how it is created, distributed, and targeted to audiences, largely thanks to associated financial pressures and technological transformation. Once more taking a historiographic approach I constructed a foundation for my analysis with the aid of Genette's seminal paratextual theory. This allowed for a reappraisal of early film marketing strategies, revealing that a number of conventional techniques have remained in place despite the sophistication of marketing tools, and that early examples of unorthodox campaigns have been revised and updated for contemporary distribution networks. For example, the presence of static print advertisements and audiovisual spots on radio and television has been accompanied by a rise in digital paraphernalia which benefits greatly from the use of social media platforms and our increasingly interconnected global society.

Usefully, George Lucas saw the creative and economic value of tie-in merchandise when producing *Star Wars*. The unprecedented success of his approach provided a much-needed template for other studios which was quickly adopted and, as history shows, led to the regeneration of the Hollywood system. The crystallisation of this so-called blockbuster model against a backdrop of globalised conglomeration ensured Hollywood studios thrived over the next two decades. Interestingly, this also facilitated corporate synergy that persists. Recently, this has seen the popularity of serialised narratives across delivery platforms increase as corporate entities satisfy their growing interests. A growing body of work is

concerned with how paratexts have been used to facilitate this need in its secondary role of transmedia storytelling.

The comparative analyses in this chapter undoubtedly demonstrate how the internet has become indispensable in the battle for would-be audience members. Paratexts are now shared instantaneously across the globe and act as considerable drivers of internet traffic. New content delivery platforms have also opened up creative avenues that did not exist 20 years ago; a proliferation of video-hosting sites like YouTube as well as streaming services have enabled content creators to produced inter-weaved narratives across media. Emerging augmented- and virtual-reality technology continues to widen the horizons of what is packaged to viewers, and how it is delivered. As these initiatives continue to evolve at pace, it once again remains the preserve of future scholars to judge if what we are experiencing now is a veritable change in practice or if such examples are destined to be lost in time like tears in rain.

Indeed, much has even changed during the development of this thesis. As 2020 began amidst a global pandemic the effects began to quickly impact the international film industry, with the potential to shape its future much like many of the upheavals discussed in Chapter 2. In an effort to stop the spread of COVID-19, cinema theatres were closed in many territories or offered reduced capacity in line with health and safety guidance, with considerable consequences for the box office (D'Alessandro, 2020b). Consequently, many blockbuster films originally scheduled for release in 2020 have been delayed indefinitely (Vulture Editors, 2021). In an attempt to offset some of the financial damage, and perhaps test consumer confidence, studios have taken the decision to release certain films on their streaming platforms for a premium fee, as was the case with Disney's live-action *Mulan* (2020) remake (Katz, 2020). And yet others, including Pixar's *Soul* (2020), have had the promise of a theatrical premiere rescinded entirely, to be made available exclusively for subscribers on the platform in question (McClintock, 2020). Furthermore, certain films which saw their theatrical run cut short, for example *Onward* (2020), have also been made available to stream much earlier than intended (Gemmill, 2020).

Although it seems premature to comment on the long-term viability of these release strategies, it is evident that because the digital infrastructure is there, this offers a valuable lifeline for cinema during these unprecedented times. Indeed, keen to benefit from this, Warner Bros. recently made the significant announcement that they will release their films day-and-date in theatres and on its HBO Max streaming service throughout 2021 in a move sure to have considerable consequences for the industry moving forward (Vagg, 2020). Ultimately, it remains difficult to predict how the medium will emerge from the pandemic as the future is always in motion. Future study is required in order to determine how exactly the global film industry has been impacted, and to what extent digital technology has allowed it to persist. Nevertheless, if the industry is to once again prosper, regain its global strength, if it is to survive, it may have to turn digital.

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Filmography

12 Years a Slave – UK/USA (2013) dir. Steve McQueen

28 Days Later – UK (2002) dir. Danny Boyle

2001: A Space Odyssey – USA (1968) dir. Stanley Kubrick

2022: Blackout – Japan/USA (2017) dir. Shinichirō Watanabe

2036: Nexus Dawn – USA (2017) dir. Luke Scott

2048: Nowhere to Run – USA (2017) dir. Luke Scott

Aladdin – USA (2019) dir. Guy Ritchie

Alien – USA (1979) dir. Ridley Scott

Alien: Covenant – UK/USA (2017) dir. Ridley Scott

Alien: Covenant in Utero – USA (2017) dir. David Karlak

Aliens – USA (1986) dir. James Cameron

Alien 3 – USA (1992) dir. David Fincher

Alien Resurrection – USA (1997) dir. Jean-Pierre Jeunet

Alien vs. Predator – Canada/Czech Republic/Germany/UK/USA (2004) dir. Paul W. S. Anderson

Aliens vs. Predator: Requiem – USA (2007) dir. Greg Strause and Colin Strause

American Graffiti – USA (1973) dir. George Lucas

American History X – USA (1998) dir. Tony Kaye

Animatrix, The – Japan/USA (2003) dir. Kōji Morimoto, Shinichiro Watanabe, Mahiro Maeda, Peter Chung, Andy Jones, Yoshiaki Kawajiri, Takeshi Koike

Ant-Man – USA (2015) dir. Peyton Reed

Apocalypse Now – USA (1979) dir. Francis Ford Coppola

Artifact from the Future: The Making of 'THX 1138' – USA (2004) dir. Gary Leva

Artist, The – France (2011) dir. Michel Hazanavicius

Assassin's Creed – USA (2016) dir. Justin Kurzel

Avatar – UK/USA (2009) dir. James Cameron

Avengers: Endgame – USA (2019) dir. Anthony Russo, Joe Russo

Avengers: Endgame De-Feminized Edit – (2019) editor anonymous

Avengers: Infinity War – USA (2018) dir. Anthony Russo, Joe Russo

Avengers, The – USA (2012) dir. Joss Whedon

Back to the Future – USA (1985) dir. Robert Zemeckis

Bad Samaritan – USA (2018) dir. Dean Devlin

Batman – USA (1989) dir. Tim Burton

Batman v Superman: Dawn of Justice – USA (2016) dir. Zack Snyder

Beasts of No Nation – USA (2015) dir. Cary Joi Fukunaga

Becky Sharp – USA (1935) dir. Robert Mamoulian

Beverly Hills Cop – USA (1984) dir. Martin Brest

Black Mirror: Bandersnatch – UK (2018) dir. David Slade

Blade Runner – Hong Kong/USA (1982) dir. Ridley Scott
Blade Runner 2049 – USA (2017) dir. Denis Villeneuve
Bloodyminded – UK (2018) dir. Matt Adams
Body Heat – USA (1981) dir. Lawrence Kasdan
Bodysong – UK (2003) dir. Simon Pummell
Bohemian Rhapsody – UK/USA (2018) dir. Bryan Singer
Bonnie and Clyde – USA (1967) dir. Warren Beatty
Bubble – USA (2005) dir. Steven Soderbergh
Captain America: Civil War – USA (2016) dir. Anthony Russo, Joe Russo
Chinatown – USA (1974) dir. Roman Polanski
Citizen Kane – USA (1941) dir. Orson Welles
Cloverfield Paradox, The – USA (2018) dir. Julius Onah
Colossal – Canada/Spain (2017) dir. Nacho Vigalondo
Covered Wagon, The – USA (1923) dir. James Cruze
Dark City – USA (1998) dir. Alex Proyas
Dark Knight, The – UK/USA (2008) dir. Christopher Nolan
Doctor Sleep – USA (2019) dir. Mike Flanagan
Don Juan – USA (1926) dir. Alan Crosland
Dumbo – USA (2019) dir. Tim Burton
eXistenZ – Canada/France/UK (1999) dir. David Cronenberg
Easy Rider – USA (1969) dir. Dennis Hopper
E.T. The Extra-Terrestrial – USA (1982) dir. Steven Spielberg
Field in England, A – UK (2013) dir. Ben Wheatley
Forrest Gump – USA (1994) dir. Robert Zemeckis
French Connection, The – USA (1971) dir. William Friedkin
"From Puppets to Pixels": Digital Characters in 'Episode II' – USA (2002) dir. Jon Shenk
Frozen – USA (2013) dir. Chris Buck, Jennifer Lee
Frozen 2 – USA (2019) dir. Chris Buck, Jennifer Lee
Gamer – USA (2009) dir. Mark Neveldine, Brian Taylor
Ghostbusters – USA (1984) dir. Ivan Reitman
Godfather, The – USA (1972) dir. Francis Ford Coppola
Godfather Part II, The – USA (1974) dir. Francis Ford Coppola
Godfather Part III, The – USA (1990) dir. Francis Ford Coppola
Gone Girl – USA (2014) dir. David Fincher
Gone With the Wind – USA (1939) dir. Victor Fleming
Graduate, The – USA (1967) dir. Mike Nichols
Gravity – UK/USA (2013) dir. Alfonso Cuarón
Hackers – USA (1995) dir. Iain Softley
Hardcore Henry – Russia/USA (2015) dir. Ilya Naishuller

Hardware Wars – USA (1978) dir. Ernie Fosselius

Harmy's Despecialized Edition – USA (2011) dir. Petr Harmáček

Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows – Part 2 – UK/USA (2011) dir. David Yates

Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire – UK/USA (2005) dir. Mike Newell

Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone – UK/USA (2001) dir. Chris Columbus

Hearts of Darkness: A Filmmaker's Apocalypse – USA (1991) dir. Fax Bahr, George Hickenlooper, and Eleanor Coppola

Hobbit: An Unexpected Journey, The – New Zealand/USA (2012) dir. Peter Jackson

Hobbit: The Battle of the Five Armies, The – New Zealand/USA (2014) dir. Peter Jackson

Hobbit: The Desolation of Smaug, The – New Zealand/USA (2013) dir. Peter Jackson

Hobbit: The Tolkien Edit, The – USA (2015) edited by tolkieneditor

Home Alone – USA (1990) dir. Chris Columbus

Howard the Duck – USA (1986). dir. Willard Huyck

Independence Day – USA (1996) dir. Roland Emmerich

Indiana Jones and the Kingdom of the Crystal Skull – USA (2008) dir. Steven Spielberg

Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade – USA (1989) dir. Steven Spielberg

Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom – USA (1984) dir. Steven Spielberg

I'm Your Man – USA (1992) dir. Bob Bejan

Irishman, The – USA (2019) dir. Martin Scorsese

Iron Man – USA (2008) dir. Jon Favreau

Jaws – USA (1975) dir. Steven Spielberg

Jay and Silent Bob Reboot – USA (2019) dir. Kevin Smith

Jazz Singer, The – USA (1927) dir. Alan Crosland

Jumanji: Welcome to the Jungle – USA (2017) dir. Jake Kasdan

Jurassic Park – USA (1993) dir. Steven Spielberg

Justice League – USA (2017) dir. Zack Snyder

Kinoautomat – Czechoslovakia (1967) dir. Radúz Činčera

Labyrinth – USA (1986) dir. Jim Henson

Lady in the Lake – USA (1947) dir. Robert Montgomery

Last Jedi: The De-Feminized Fanedit, The – USA (2018) editor anonymous

Last Picture Show, The – USA (1971) dir. Peter Bogdanovich

Lion King, The – USA (1994) dir. Roger Allers, Rob Minkoff

Lion King, The – USA (2019) dir. Jon Favreau

Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring, The – New Zealand/USA (2001) dir. Peter Jackson

Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King, The – New Zealand/USA (2003) dir. Peter Jackson

Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers, The – New Zealand/USA (2002) dir. Peter Jackson

Lost in London – UK (2017) dir. Woody Harrelson

Mandy – Canada/USA (2018) dir. Panos Cosmatos
Maniac – France/USA (2012) fir. Franck Khalfoun
*M*A*S*H* – USA (1970) dir. Robert Altman
Matrix, The – Australia/USA (1999) dir. The Wachowski Brothers
Matrix Reloaded, The – Australia/USA (2003) dir. The Wachowski Brothers
Matrix Revolutions, The – Australia/USA (2003) dir. The Wachowski Brothers
Mean Streets – USA (1973) dir. Martin Scorsese
Meeting People Is Easy – UK (1998) dir. Grant Gee
Men In Black – USA (1997) dir. Barry Sonnenfeld
Midnight Cowboy – USA (1969) dir. John Schlesinger
Midsommar – Hungary/Sweden/USA (2019) dir. Ari Aster
Mission: Impossible II – USA (2000) dir. John Woo
More American Graffiti – USA (1979) dir. B.W.L. Norton
Mulan – USA (2020) dir. Niki Caro
My Little Eye – UK (2002) dir. Marc Evans
Nebraska – USA (2013) dir. Alexander Payne
Net, The – USA (1995) dir. Irwin Winkler
No Maps for These Territories – Canada (2000) dir. Mark Neale
Onward – USA (2020) dir. Dan Scanlon
Pirates of the Caribbean: At World's End – USA (2007) dir. Gore Verbinski
Pirates of the Caribbean: Dead Man's Chest – USA (2006) dir. Gore Verbinski
Prometheus – UK/USA (2012) dir. Ridley Scott
Rage – USA (2009) dir. Sally Potter
Raiders – USA (2014) edited by Steven Soderbergh
Raiders of the Lost Ark – USA (1981) dir. Steven Spielberg
Raiders of the Lost Ark: The Adaptation – USA (1989) dir. Eric Zala
Ready Player One – USA (2018) dir. Steven Spielberg
Resident Evil – Germany/UK (2002) dir. Paul W. S. Anderson
Road to Guantánamo, The – UK (2006) dir. Michael Winterbottom
Rogue One: A Star Wars Story – USA (2016) dir. Gareth Edwards
Roma – Mexico/USA (2018) dir. Alfonso Cuarón
Rosemary's Baby – USA (1968) dir. Roman Polanski
Rumble Fish – USA (1983) dir. Francis Ford Coppola
Schindler's List – USA (1993) dir. Steven Spielberg
Shrek 2 – USA (2004) dir. Andrew Adamson, Kelly Asbury, Conrad Vernon
Siege of Jadotville, The – Ireland/South Africa (2016) dir. Richie Smyth
Silent Times – USA (2018) dir. Christopher Annino
Silver Goat, The – UK (2012) dir. Aaron Brookner
Sixth Sense, The – USA (1999) dir. M. Night Shyamalan

Soldier – USA (1998) dir. Paul W. S. Anderson

Soul – USA (2020) dir. Pete Docter

Star Is Born, A – USA (1937) dir. William A. Wellman

StarLego – Australia (1990) dir. Kevin Burfitt and Myles Abbott

Star Wars: Episode I – The Phantom Menace – USA (1999) dir. George Lucas

Star Wars: Episode I.I: The Phantom Edit – USA (2000) edited by Mike J. Nichols

Star Wars: Episode II – Attack of the Clones – USA (2002) dir. George Lucas

Star Wars: Episode II.I: Attack of the Phantom – USA (2002) edited by Mike J. Nichols

Star Wars: Episode III – Revenge of the Sith – USA (2005) dir. George Lucas

Star Wars: Episode III.5: The Editor Strikes Back – USA (2012) edited by Topher Grace

Star Wars: Episode IV – A New Hope – USA (1977) dir. George Lucas

Star Wars: Episode V – The Empire Strikes Back – UK/USA (1980) dir. Irvin Kershner

Star Wars: Episode VI – Return of the Jedi – UK/USA (1983) dir. Richard Marquand

Star Wars: Episode VII – The Force Awakens – USA (2015) dir. J.J. Abrams

Star Wars: Episode VIII – The Last Jedi – USA (2017) dir. Rian Johnson

Star Wars: Episode IX – The Rise of Skywalker – USA (2019) dir. J.J. Abrams

Star Wars Holiday Special – USA (1978) dir. Steve Binder

Star Wars Silver Screen Edition – USA (2016) edited by Team Negative One

Star Wars Trilogy: Special Edition – USA (1997) dir. George Lucas

Star Wars Uncut – USA (2010) dir. Casey Pugh

Starwoids – USA (2001) dir. Dennis Pryzwara

Strange Days – USA (1995) dir. Kathryn Bigelow

Suicide Squad – USA (2016) dir. David Ayer

Super Mario Bros. – USA (1993) dir. Rocky Morton and Annabel Jankel

Tangerine – USA (2015) dir. Sean Baker

Terminator 2: Judgment Day – USA (1991) dir. James Cameron

"The Beginning": Making Episode I – USA (2001) dir. Jon Shenk

Thirteenth Floor, The – Germany/USA (1999) dir. Josef Rusnak

THX 1138 – USA (1971) dir. George Lucas

Titanic – USA (1997) dir. James Cameron

Tootsie – USA (1982) dir. Sidney Pollack

Topper – USA (1937) dir. Norman Z. McLeod

Toy Story – USA (1995) dir. John Lasseter

Toy Story 2 – USA (1999) dir. John Lasseter

Toy Story 3 – USA (2010) dir. Lee Unkrich

Toy Story 4 – USA (2019) dir. Josh Cooley

Transformers: Age of Extinction – USA (2014) dir. Michael Bay

Triple Frontier – USA (2019) dir. J. C. Chandor

Tron – USA (1982) dir. Steve Lisberger

Troops – USA (1997) dir. Kevin Rubio
Twister – USA (1996) dir. Jan de Bont
Unknown Visitor - USA (2019) dir. Isaac Rodriguez
Unsane – USA (2018) dir. Steven Soderbergh
Untitled Indiana Jones Project – USA (2021) dir. Steven Spielberg
Virtuosity – USA (1995) dir. Brett Leonard
Widows – UK/USA (2018) dir. Steve McQueen
Willow – USA (1988) dir. Ron Howard
"Within a Minute": The Making of Episode III – USA (2005) dir. Tippy Bushkin
Wizard of Oz, The – USA (1939) dir. Victor Fleming
Wonder Woman – USA (2017) dir. Patty Jenkins

Television Series

13 Reasons Why (2017 – present) [USA: Netflix]
24 Hours in A&E (2011 – present) [UK: Channel 4]
24 Hours in Police Custody (2014 – present) [UK: Channel 4]
Agents of S.H.I.E.L.D. (2013 – present) [USA: ABC]
Agents of S.H.I.E.L.D.: Slingshot (2016) [USA: YouTube]
Cloak & Dagger (2018 – present) [USA: Freeform]
COPS – (1989 – present) [USA: Fox; Spike; The Paramount Network]
Crown, The (2016 – present) [USA: Netflix]
Gogglebox (2013 – present) [UK: Channel 4]
Good Morning America (1975 – present) [USA: ABC]
Mandalorian, The (2019 – present) [USA: Disney+]
Misfits (2009 – 2013) [UK: E4]
Narcos (2015 – 2017) [USA: Netflix]
Orange Is the New Black (2013 – present) [USA: Netflix]
Runaways (2017 – present) [USA: Hulu]
Sesame Street (1969 – present) [USA: NET; PBS; HBO]
Skins (2007 – 2013) [UK: E4]
Star Wars Rebels (2014 – 2018) [USA: Disney XD]
Star Wars: The Clone Wars (2008 – 2013; 2014; 2019 – 2020) [USA: Cartoon Network; Netflix; Disney+]
WHIH Newsfront (2015 – 2016) [USA: YouTube]
Widows (1983 – 1985) [UK: ITV]
Witcher, The (2019 – present) [USA: Netflix]
You vs. Wild (2019 – present) [USA: Netflix]
Young Indiana Jones Chronicles, The (1993 – 1993) [USA: ABC; The Family Channel]

Videogames

Atari, Inc. (1972) *Pong* [Sunnyvale: Atari]

CD Projekt Red (2015) *The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt* (Warsaw: CD Projekt)

LucasArts (1996) *Star Wars: Shadows of the Empire* (San Francisco: Nintendo)

Quantic Dream (2010) *Heavy Rain* [San Mateo: Sony Computer Entertainment]

Quantic Dream (2013) *Beyond: Two Souls* [San Mateo: Sony Computer Entertainment]

Quantic Dream (2018) *Detroit: Become Human* [San Mateo: Sony Interactive Entertainment]

Stodart, Andy and Foster, Ian (1985) *Blade Runner* (London: CRL Group PLC)

Supermassive Games (2014) *Until Dawn* [San Mateo: Sony Computer Entertainment]

Visceral Games (2008) *Dead Space* (Redwood City: Electronic Arts Inc.)

Westwood Studios (1997) *Blade Runner* (Las Vegas: Virgin Interactive)

Songs

Inner Circle (1987) *Bad Boys* [Single] Island Records