
Media between Media: ‘Making-of’s and the Hidden Faces of Film Adaptation

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Comparing source and target media products is the main intermedial method for studying adaptations. The inventory of similarities and differences produced by such an endeavour provides evidence for the processes of transfer and transformation that have happened between the two media. But the finished media products are not the only traces of the process of adaptation. In practices of adaptation that happen inside media industries, such as film adaptations, the process is also documented in different forms and for different archival or market-oriented purposes. The process of film adaptation is, for instance, usually captured – although in fragments and in a staged format – by intermediary filmic media products – such as ‘making-of’s – that are rarely considered as the main study objects in adaptation studies. As this article argues, such processual ways of looking at adaptations do not undermine the importance of comparative approaches but complicate the grounds for comparison. Suggesting a methodological shift to the process, the article expands this idea through a cross-pollination between adaptation studies and (media) production studies and exemplifies it through discussion of examples and one extended case study.

Adaptation, Production, Process

‘Adaptation’, in all its narrow and broad conceptualizations, implies change and movement. Whether referring to the popular strategies of adaptation in the entertainment industry or to the broader cultural processes of transformation and adjustment, adaptation involves an in-between phase of unsettlement, going from an old point of stability to a new one. Especially when it comes to adaptation in media, much interest is usually put in the beginning and ending of this process, in the source

and the target, as they provide points of certainty and relative objectivity for investigation. The process of change and unsettlement between these points – although always present, assumed and evaluated – is rarely an object of study in itself.

In adaptation studies, Linda Hutcheon's proposition to consider adaptation in the artistic realm as both process and product (Hutcheon 2012) soon became a catchphrase and a theoretical directive. The novelty of this proposition lay in its emphasis on process in a broader attempt to expand the perspective of adaptation studies beyond the comparison between the two final products. A process, for that matter, consists of several steps and compartments, implies movement and transformation in time, and is oftentimes goal-oriented. Understanding adaptation in processual terms would consequently imply a dynamic and change-based conceptualization of adaptation in which the in-between stages do not fade away for the sake of the final product to shine but are in their own turn spaces for production and negotiation of meanings.

Highlighting the process in adaptation can be done in the broader discussions of theories of media where a tension between process and product has an old history. In 'Processual media theory', Ned Rossiter outlines this tension as one between political economy and aesthetics, suggesting that the former 'has a tendency to treat the media as a set of objects and, accordingly, objectivises media technologies or media content as "products,"' while '[t]he aesthetic dimension of new media resides in the processes—the ways of doing, the recombination of relations, the figural dismantling of action—that constitute the abstraction of the social' (Rossiter 2003: 105).

Such tendencies can be traced in various scholarly directions in studies on adaptation that reconceptualize adaptation in dynamic frameworks, redefine the study object of adaptation to include the unfinished version, or move beyond case studies into the relevant industries. In theoretical discussions, looking at performative aspects of adaptation or situating adaptation in the broader framework of 'media transformation' (Elleström 2013) are examples of such dynamic reconceptualizations. The process of creation has been foregrounded in methodological dialogues with genetic criticism (Rossholm 2013) and screenplay studies (Sherry 2016; Boozer 2021) that study the textual and intertextual aspects of film production by going through the archives and studying notes, drafts, and versions of screenplays. And finally, more radical suggestions have arisen for moving beyond texts and cases and looking at the market for adaptations and the industrial dynamics that shape the production, popularity and reception of adaptations (Murray 2012).

In the same spirit, and with a specific focus on film adaptation, I suggest looking at the production process of adaptations, through a cross-pollination of adaptation studies and the field of media production. Such cross-pollination entails an understanding of processes of (re/trans)mediation as meeting points for aesthetic, cultural, economic, political and industrial structures that affect and determine the dos and don'ts in each specific case, as well as the individual and collective agencies of the authors and their initiatives and interventions (Mayer *et al.* 2009). This is,

however, easier said than done: to even take the first step to reach such a multifaceted understanding, one would need new and hybrid methodologies and an expanded mapping out of the study object beyond the source and the target.

A methodological risk in focusing on the process of adaptation, which might have scared away scholars from giving more attention to it, is to get entrapped within authorial intentions, quite an unforgivable sin for those of us who have been informed and have been repeatedly reminded of the death of the author for many years. The more recent studies in media authorship have, however, tried to scrutinize the myth of the author and his or her death as well as the phobia of intentions by suggesting new understandings of authorship that are more adaptable to the current media scenery of major transmedia franchises and minor content-generation of media-users (Johnson and Gray 2013). In such light, authorial intentions are rather reformulated as intentional fluxes (Burnett 2013), inclusive of vague and unclear ideas, formed in dialogue between different agents in the process of media production and constantly subject to change, depending on the opportunities, demands and flexibility of the media market.

Furthermore, studying the process of adaptation raises a methodological challenge as it would oftentimes mean putting a phenomenon at the core of the discussion, which has already evaporated into the air. Beginning from the final product, as we usually do, entails an a posteriori construction of the process and a backwards engineering of the media production and transformation process. Traces or retellings of the adaptation process have indeed been part of analysis even in the most traditional ways of doing adaptation studies. Information about how the adaptation has been created is usually taken from interviews and contextual material and is referred to in studies to support the arguments, with glimpses on authorial choices and intentions. The process is assumed, guessed, and implied, and parts of it are cherry-picked to form a coherent narrative of change and movement from point A, the source, to point B, the product.

In film studies, studies on production have mainly been geared towards studying the economical and industrial structures that determine media production. Diverting from this direction, television scholar Elena Levine suggests a cultural view of production studies that looks at the production process as contexts of meaning making in its own way (Levine 2001). Adopting an ethnological approach in her methodology, Levine based her research on an observation of the backstage dynamics of the TV series *General Hospital* and developed five analytical categories for mapping out the dynamics of production in a fine-grained analysis: production constraints; production environment; production routines and practices; production of characters and stories; audiences in production.

Levine's framework provides a good starting point for studying the processual aspects of film production with its focus on audiovisual media production, but can also be fruitful in cultivating a processual view on adaptation in the broader sense of media transformation and as a communication practice. Her hands-on research and analysis rest upon a willingness to revitalize the production side in studying communication and, to enable this theoretical path, she positions her work in

dialogue with Stuart Hall's 'encoding/decoding' communication model (Hall 2003) and Richard Johnson's 'circuit of culture' model (Johnson 1986). What characterizes these two models of communication is the way they map out the connection between the two practices of producing and perceiving signs without forsaking one side for the other. In the same spirit, Levine's proposition highlights the encoding and communicative aspects of media production.

Perhaps an ideal way for studying the production process of adaptations would be to adopt an observational and quasi-ethnological approach, as Levine has done, and follow the production crew in the actual process of transforming a source to a target. Such research practice, while most welcome and fruitful in capturing the process, might indeed prove only to be feasible in rare cases, as it not only needs a privileged access to information but also counteracts the general logic of the entertainment industry, in concealing the production from the public's view. The practice of documenting the process has, however, been performed with different objectives and in more limited scales for many films, the result of which is published in the form of *behind-the-scenes* (BTS) or *Making-ofs*.

'Making-of' as Object of Study

Making-ofs are categorized as documentaries that feature the production of a film or TV-series and often serve as promotional material, accompanying the theatrical releases, DVD packages, or nowadays are available on streaming services. An important aspect in the credibility of the filmic world and the marketability of the industry is to hide its construction from view as much as possible, but then also to construct a glorified aura around the production afterwards. In such a spirit, traces of the processes of filmmaking are usually released in controlled and choreographed ways. The making-ofs, trailers and interviews have a marketing value while also oftentimes creating an aura of amicable, hard, collective work around the film. They break the reality bubble by putting the actors on stage as *real* individuals and having them express the process while creating another type of bubble around the 'work', as a collective artistic work. However, to claim authenticity, they might as well visit the process and capture traces of it and in so doing invite the audience backstage.

New media and internet platforms have created vast and diverse opportunities for the publication and circulation of such material, both by production crews and companies and as promotion material, and by fans and audiences with various objectives. Brief interviews with the crew and special feature clips of one- to two-minutes length are published by large companies on their YouTube channels and official Instagram accounts, and bloopers and annotated scenes of popular films and TV-series circulate among more fan-based and unofficial pages across social media platforms.

Making-ofs are different in different traditions. One difference would, for example, be the way the authorship of the film is conceptualized in the making-of and how different creative agents are foregrounded to be the main persona(s) in the

process. While a tendency to situate the film as art-house cinema or an auteur film will push the BTS to centre on the writer-director, a 'making-of' of a film belonging to a transnational media franchise would probably put much heavier weight on the characters and actors. In some experimental cases, the backstage footage revealing the process might drastically transform the reception experience. An interesting example of the latter is *Shirin* (2008) by Abbas Kiarostami. The 83 minute film features close-ups of 113 actresses as they each sat on a chair in a theatre hall, reacting to what they apparently see on a screen. The voice-over suggests that what they are watching is a screen adaptation of *Khosrow and Shirin*, a classical and tragic Persian romance, which in its most famous version was put into poetry in the 1100s by Nizami Ganjavi. *Khosrow and Shirin* tells a love triangle story between Khosrow (a Persian prince), Farhad (a mason – in the literal sense, carver of stones), and Shirin (an Armenian princess). The actors in Kiarostami's film, seemingly in reaction to the romantic story they are hearing, show various facial expressions that convince the spectator of their deep immersion in the story.

Taste of Shirin^a (2008) the 26-minute making-of of the film, directed by Hamideh Razavi,^b reveals that the female actors have not been exposed to anything related to the romantic tale of *Khosrow and Shirin*, but have instead been directed towards showing different emotions. The making-of features Kiarostami explaining (on the verge of dictating) the emotions and facial expressions he expects from the female actors, from staring into the dark to bursting into a laugh or tears, sometimes catalysing the emergence of the desired emotion by telling a joke or igniting a sad memory, but never giving the actors a full picture of the film. In this way, while the feature film is a film of many female actors and their emotions, the making-of foregrounds the male director as the mastermind behind it all. In my experience of watching *Shirin* in an arthouse context in Tehran in 2008, the making-of was screened right after the film and comprised an important element of the perception and interpretation process for the spectators. It, in fact, immediately destabilized the perception of *Shirin* as an album of close-ups and a professionally performed radio-drama to an elemental artistic practice in which a whole is created from various unrelated directing and acting practices.

In the case of less experimental adaptations, the BTS usually includes a great deal of information about the move from the source to the target and serves to formulate the authorial and media power relations between the literary and the cinematic. New adaptations of already-cinematized classic novels offer easily graspable examples of such promotional materials as, in this case, there usually is a need to justify the investment in a new adaptation. An example among thousands is Greta Gerwig's *Little Women* (2019) and its brief special feature clips published by Sony Pictures Entertainment on its YouTube Channel. In one clip, titled as 'Greta Gerwig: Women Making Art "approach"',^c a combination of different types of material is presented in only 97 seconds: interviews with the producer, actors, and Gerwig herself; photos and footage of the backstage showing Gerwig as she films, and directs her crew; an image of the screenplay's first page as well as images of old copies

of Alcott's *Little Women*, all promoting the 2019 *Little Women* as one for women of today made only possible by the smart creation and management of the female director.

While in the case of *The Taste of Shirin*, the making-of is less of a marketing intermediary document and more an extra media product in the broader artistic experience of Kiarostami as an auteur-director, the backstage as presented in *Little Women*'s special feature clips functions as a support tool in marketing and meaning-making for the final product. In some other cases, such as the one being analysed in the next section, the documentary value and documentation functions are further foregrounded, turning the making-of into a piece that captures the process, promotes the product, and affects the processes of meaning-making that shape the work.

In the next section, I will analyse *La Face cachée de Persepolis* (2007) using a modified version of Levine's model. For this analysis, I have also interviewed the director^d of the making-of and have used her responses to further nuance my analysis of the making-of.

Adapting a Graphic Novel, a Life, and a Persona to Screen: *The Hidden Face of Persepolis*

La Face cachée de Persepolis (2007) or *The Hidden Face of Persepolis* directed by Marie Cogné is a 30-minute making-of about the animated film *Persepolis* (2007, Satrapi and Paronnaud). *La Face* documents the backstage of *Persepolis* and includes interviews with the directors, artists, illustrators, animators, and voice-actors, as well as recordings of the interactions between them and instances of them working together. It offers a step-by-step presentation of the film production by first situating the co-authorship between the two directors and telling the story of how it started and then showing several steps of image production. It then moves on to sound, beginning with Foley sounds and then focusing for a significant amount of time on voice actors and their work.

Persepolis (2007) is a French-speaking animation created by Marjane Satrapi and Vincent Paronnaud, based on the four-volume^e autobiographical graphic novel of the same title, drawn and written by Satrapi and gradually published in France between 2000 and 2003. In both versions, *Persepolis* narrates the life story of Marjane, from childhood to early adulthood during which she witnesses the 1979 revolution in Iran and the political oppression thereafter; she migrates to Austria to study; returns to Iran and lives in the post-war Tehran; lives, studies, works, marries and gets divorced in the ideologically charged atmosphere of the country; and finally leaves for a definite migration to France. The graphic novel was published not long after the 9/11 attacks that had yet again put Iran and its Islamist government in the spotlight. It was soon translated to English and achieved a wide number and huge diversity of audiences across cultures, both as a masterful autobiographical graphic novel and as a different account of life in Iran. The film, a 96-minute, mostly black-and-white, hand-drawn animation, followed the fame of the graphic novel and in some respects changed its reception and circulation, for example by reaching Iran

more readily than the book and stirring agitated reactions from the Iranian government (see Chute 2008; Chute 2010; Mousavi 2021). The film was produced by *2.4.7 Films*, a small production company in Paris, and was created in close collaboration between Satrapi and Vincent Paronnaud, who is better known in France by his nom de plume 'Winchluss'.

Persepolis is different from the majority of mainstream film adaptations, as the author of the original has been actively involved in the creation of the adaptation. The autobiographical quality of the narrative puts even more weight on the extended authorial presence of Satrapi as the author of the book and co-author of the film. While the film has also enjoyed a wide, global reception, its relation to the graphic novel, as an 'adaptation', remains quite uneasy. The extended authorial agency, hand-in-hand with the drawn image being the basic media in both versions, has created an illusion of sameness in the reception of the film (Mousavi 2021: 92). In other words, the famous 'I haven't read the book, but I have seen the film' phrase might be stated more confidently in the case of *Persepolis* as one might take the authorial persistence as a promise for absolute fidelity.

The picture that *La Face* creates of the process of adapting *Persepolis* goes totally against this impression of sameness and situates the film as an independent work, the outcome of collective hard work performed by several creative agents that come together under the direction of Satrapi and Parronaud. The making-of departmentalizes the film and shows the accumulative, stage-by-stage process of the painstaking task of creating a hand-drawn animation and its constraints. The process, in this case, refers to both 'stages' and 'gradual evolution', from the creation of each separate layer of the film: the screenplay, the voice-recordings, the images, the sounds to the process of all this coming together and gradually shaping a final, coherent media product.

In my analysis of *La Face*, I use a modified version of Levine's categories – constraints, environment, characters and stories, audience, and routines and practices – adapted for analysing the process of an adaptation through analysing the making-of. For this purpose, I have added two analytical categories of 'intermedial positioning' and 'authorial shifts' regarding adaptation, and one other on 'the stagedness of the making-of', under which I discuss what is left out and what is emphasized in this specific making-of.

Constraints of Production

In Levine's categorization, constraints refer mainly to the practical conditions of production (including available finances, skills, locations, etc.) that delimit the scope of manoeuvring for the production team. While such constraints are obviously relevant in any type of filmmaking due to the necessity of high capitals in film production, the focus in *La Face* is rather on the *representational* constraints that determine the adaptation process in *Persepolis*.

In any case of film adaptation, the original provides a mass of potentials while also limiting the scope for manoeuvring in what and how the story world is going to

be visualized. In addition to the practical and industrial conditions of access to capitals and skills at the time of the production, such constraints are determined by the adopted approach to adaptation, namely to which extent the adaptation will try to be exact in visualization and to which extent it will intentionally diverge from it.

The representational constraints in *Persepolis* arise from its political subject matter, the specificity of the geography in which it is situated, and the realistic and documentary value attached to the story with its autobiographical and historical claims. *Persepolis* creates a counter-memory that challenges the official version of history disseminated and controlled by the Iranian government. Without reservations and compromises, it represents the state oppression in a way that was quite unprecedented at the time of its publication. It is a narrative produced outside the country and by a migrant author, and the thought of creating a film adaptation of it in Iran, as the original setting, would be out of question. Not having access to the original setting while aspiring for a realistic representation, the stakes of verisimilitude would be very high. Following the example of comics and using animation instead of live action is suggested to be the strategy to counteract this problem of realism and documentation. The drawn image, with its abstractness and foregrounded constructedness, outweighs the photographic image in its potential for a realistic enactment of the Iranian setting. In doing so, it also symbolizes the impossibility of telling such a story in the flesh at this specific moment in history in the specific location to which it is referring.

This point, which is a crucial decision regarding the adaptation, is taken up early in *La Face* as Satrapi explains that if they had made a film as live action and with real actors, '[...] right away it would be an ethnic film. It becomes the problem of those people who live over there and are crazy about God, etc, etc. But drawings, with their abstract quality, emphasize the universal' (3:04–3:25). By using drawn images, as she argues, the oppression and the dictatorship shown in the movie will be represented in its universal pertinence and as something that can happen anywhere. In addition, Satrapi mentions the dream-like structure of many of the scenes, which in real action would turn the film into science fiction or fantasy, but drawn images do so without creating a huge rupture with the realistic representation. The latter point highlights the potential of drawn images for representing subjective realities, which is seconded in the discussions on the documentary value of drawn images in portraying unmediated or hard-to-mediate scenes in animated documentaries and documentary comics (see DelGaudio 1997; Roe 2013; Chute 2016; Mickwitz 2016).

Environment of Production

La Face creates an image of a hard-working troupe of artists working in an independent, friendly environment and in the safe hands of directors who have a clear vision of what they are aiming for. After a brief quotation from the book, the film begins by entering the studio: a medium-sized hall with small rooms and cubicles on each side of it, occupied by artists who are responsible for different stages of image production. The introduction to the space fades into Satrapi commenting on the

historically retroactive choice of hand-drawn animation. She gives two reasons for the choice, first the short life of computer-generated images that soon begin to look 'dated', and then the perfection of CGI. The perfection of computer-generated images is in contrast with the imperfection of a human being and a human image, she argues, and the vibration of the human hand in drawing images brings the image to life (4:20–4:49).

Satrapi's authenticity-promoting argument foregrounds the connection between the images and the artistic and artisanal hands of all involved agents. *La Face* includes interviews with those responsible in each stage, showcasing each type of creative agency, while constantly emphasizing the role of directorial intentions in shaping the momentum and consistency of the creative work. When it comes to voice acting, the amicable image of the production environment becomes even sharper, as the celebrity actors – Chiara Mastroianni and Danielle Darrieux – explain their collaboration with Satrapi, constructing the image of an energetic, funny, and capable author: 'this wonderful girl who pushes you, who gives you warmth' (26:07).

Routines and Practices of Production

Through a step-by-step representation of the process, *La Face* works as a statement in claiming and showcasing the labour that goes into transforming a graphic novel into a hand-drawn animated movie. The animators create the main, model images; the assistant animators create the intermediary images needed for implying a sense of movement; the tracers work on the lines, their thickness and curves; and then the images undergo colourization in the final stage. Each step involves a group of people, sometimes five to six and sometimes, as for example in the case of assistant animators, more than a dozen. The importance and difficulty of maintaining consistency in the collective and processual creation of the images is emphasized by, for example, Thierry Pérèse (11:24–11:50), the supervisor of assistant animators. Furthermore, it is the importance of 'graphic identity' with the images of the source, *Marjane's images*, that is highlighted by the supervisor of tracers, Frank Miyet (12:25–15:17), whose job is to change and control the thickness and shapes of lines, which also play a crucial role in the affective impact of the film.

Production of Characters and Stories: Transformation, Remembering, Reconstructing

The characters and stories of the film are transformations of those in the graphic novel, while simultaneously being reconstructions of Satrapi's lived experience and representations of actual people in her surroundings. The presence and authorial agency of Satrapi, as the one who has not only created the source narrative, but also lived the experiences, makes the dynamics more complicated. It is as if not only the book but also the author and her performances function as sources for adaptation. In a way, and as portrayed by *La Face*, the book disappears in the process and is replaced by instances of remembering and multiple moments of Satrapi *miming* what

this or that character would actually look or act like. The determining role of Satrapi's miming performances is emphasized in multiple places in *La Face*. Her co-director, Paronnaud, jokingly and performatively mimicking Satrapi, states that she would mime everything for the animators, be it the grandmother, the dog, or the table (7:24–7:39), and his remark is followed by scenes of various performing and miming moves by Satrapi (7:40–8:52).

In addition to her body and gestures, it seems that Satrapi's memories are also a source for adaptation. In one scene (6:01–7:11), where we observe the group mobilizing the sketches of an emotionally charged conversation between Marjane and her grandma about Marjane's divorce, Satrapi is shown as she mimes her grandma's gestures and tones, accompanying the performance with: 'Because for her it was only death that would matter'. This statement shows how directing is interwoven with remembering instances of the lived experience.

Audiences in Production

The question of audience is interesting and tricky in the case of adaptations as, most often, and especially in adaptations of well-received works, there already exists an audience with certain degrees of attachment to the source who would expect, receive, evaluate, and like or dislike the adaptation. Furthermore, the whole authorial crew can also be considered as the audience to the source in the first place, who then should move away from and transform the source into a new media product. Actors-as-audience comes up, for example, in actors' remarks in *La Face* as they mention their experience with books as a reason for volunteering to take part in the adaptation and what they relied on in voice acting without having access to the images.

In the case of *Persepolis*, the intended audience is also shaped by a clear political positioning at the heart of an East–West dialogue, which contains numerous tensions and miscommunications. In several interviews about the book as well as her introduction to its English translation (Satrapi 2006), Satrapi formulates her intention to provide a different image about post-revolutionary Iran for Western audiences, who have been fed a mass of reductionist images of an exotic nation under the reign of a peculiar theocracy. The process of producing the adaptation can itself be considered as a minor realization of such an intention, as – except for Satrapi – the rest of the crew have a relatively uniform demography in being ethnically French. The creative agents of the adaptation thus hold a double position of intended audience and reproducers of the narrative.

Intermedial Positioning in Production of Adaptation

In analysing adaptations and in conceptualizing the intermedial dynamics between the adapted and the adaptation, comparison reigns as the logic and the method. A comparative method is not a residue of the infamous fidelity discourse but is indeed the basis for comprehending and scrutinizing the process of repetition with change, and similar but differing products of adaptation. The intermedial dynamics

in-between the two poles of an adaptation process can also be conceptualized in a broader schema of relations and positioning, departing from the logic of comparison. In the adaptation of *Persepolis*, the intermedial positioning becomes interesting and complicated, as the persistence of the same authorial agency in different capacities defies the industrial conventions in divisions of labour and might mask the source.

In *La Face*, pages of the book are represented at the beginning, as the making-of opens and later as the co-authors tell the story of how their collaboration had begun. The animators and actors also mention the book and Marjane's directions as their main 'sources', as there were no images when they first recorded the dialogues. While the book is present in the making-of, at the end of the day not much is said about the book and it is rather pushed to the background.

In an interview,^f Satrapi challenges the stereotypical idea about comics-to-animation adaptation being a ready-made job as comics might be considered to work like storyboards for an animation and the creation of the latter would need no more than filling the gaps in-between the already existing material and flavouring it with some sound and movement. Through *La Face*, the film distances itself from the book and emphasizes how much it is almost a production from scratch. It begins with the screenplay, moves on to the voice acting, and the images come later. *La Face*, among other things, can also function as a counterstatement to the stereotypical thinking that devalues the labour put in the two media of comics and animation by ignoring their differences.

Authorial Shifts

Adaptations are scenes for encounters between different authors and authorial modes. Although not usually conceptualized as such, adaptations are in fact about a power tension between the author of the source and the author of the target. While a director who adapts a Shakespeare play for the screen would probably have to forget about any attempt at overcoming the power position of the author of the source, the tension becomes less easy to dismiss when the authors are closer in time and cultural capital.

The move from graphic novel to film is a process of authorial shift happening in several directions and parameters. Being a self-adaptation, or half-so as *Persepolis* the film is co-directed, the authorial dialogue is partly a negotiation between different performances of a self. By documenting instances of the backstage and staging the authorial process, *La Face* creates an author-persona around Satrapi (as the 'acting' director, and as the autobiographer, rather than author of the source) while at the same time framing the duo (Satrapi–Paronnaud) as a duo of 'Opposites attract': an introvert, witty, French man and an extrovert, loud, Iranian woman completing each other's work. The co-authorship between Satrapi and Paronnaud is constructed as not only an artistic and professional collaboration but also a cultural dialogue. *La Face* even gives a clue about the way this co-authorship is silently acknowledged in the film, as it cuts from a conversation with Paronnaud and Satrapi (2:37) to a scene from the film (00:1:58–00:2:00) where we see the adult Marjane in Paris

airport, hesitating in front of an information screen, and a stranger, very much looking like Paronnaud, standing beside her. Marie Cogné, the director of the making-of, reinforces this point and states that, in her view, an important incentive for the way the making-of was filmed was to foreground the way the film is different from the book, with an emphasis on the importance of the co-authorship and Winshluss' touch on the project. Moreover, the image that *La Face* creates of the process of adaptation as a collective effort expands the authorship to other creative agents beyond the duo of directors, introducing them in their several artistic and artisanal positions of creating images and sounds.

The Choreographed Backstage of the Making-of

The focus in *La Face* is on a detailed presentation of the process of creating images, dialogues, and Foley sounds. The parts of the process that are left out are those aspects that exist in almost all film productions. The editing process, film music production, and, not least, the 'camera' don't get a space in the making-of. The inclusion–exclusion dynamics in the making-of showcase an emphasis on the move from stillness and silence of the graphic novel to the audiovisual mobility of the animated movie. Such elements of choice, no matter if intentional or not, foreground a medium specificity discourse in the process of adaptation that is usually masked by the perceived closeness of the two media of comics and animation.

The making-of, with its staged and selective quality, is a space for the interaction of intentions and decisions among various authorial and power positions. The complexities of this space and its dynamics are clarified, at least to some extent, in the narrative that Marie Cogné offered in my interview with her, almost two decades after the production of the making-of. As she explains, she was first asked by the distribution company to film some of the voice acting work at the beginning of the production process. At that time, Cogné had heard of the book but was not totally familiar with what she was going to face. Two years later, when she had read the book and knew more about the process, she was invited once again, this time by the production company, to direct the making-of. An important point that she brings up is that she received lots of backstage footage already filmed by the production crew and was specifically guided to film what they asked her to document. She mentions that she 'discovered while filming', as it was her first time documenting the production of a hand-drawn animation. Her main task in documenting and filming was to represent the production space of the animation atelier and to interview the different agents, including the directors, animators and actors, in addition to filming some of the voice-acting process. Before editing and creating the full-length making-of, she was asked to create small clips that were used for promotion of the film and were widely received by the audience.

At the editing stage, she had to make many decisions about what to keep or leave out from the mass of footage that she was provided with, as well as what she herself had filmed. She emphasizes the point that more general aspects of filmmaking, such as music and editing, were left out to enable the more special and interesting ones to

occupy more space. Furthermore, she mentions the dynamics of *access*, as for example in representing the music production: thinking back today, she would have liked to include the music production too, but the music was produced outside the space that she was given access to and was not included by the production crew in the process of documenting the making-of.

Cogné highlights the artisanal and experimental quality of the production as an important factor in shaping the making-of and her own role in the process. *Persepolis* was both the first experience of a young production company and Satrapi's first experience in filmmaking. She probably wouldn't have been invited to make the making-of, she says, if the production was more mainstream and organized, as she was a young person herself fresh out of film school at the time. Mentioning the complexities of authorial rights in producing such an intermediary making-of upon request and the direction of the production crew, she clarifies that she did not have a say in the way the making-of was made public or screened in different screening events.

Conclusion

The making-of captures the production process, but it is also important to remember that it is itself part of the production process, as an important media product to enhance the market value of the media production. In the case of *La Face*, the free access to the making-of on various online platforms provides it with functions and potentials beyond the marketing and archiving aspects of making-ofs and situates it not only as a media between media, but also as an autonomous documentary about the production of one of the most famous hand-drawn animated long films in world cinema.

La Face represents the process of unsettling and resettling at the heart of adaptation. It breaks the reality bubble of the final film product by deconstructing it into its various constitutive elements. At the same time, it creates a second aura of authenticity around the work through this process of deconstruction. It shows glimpses of the 'reality' and of the actual adapting process through dismantling the coherence, as it, for example, demonstrates the way the realistic soundscape of the film is created by using Foley sounds.

The aura of authenticity, independence and artistic creation is constructed through foregrounding different creative agencies and demonstrating the artisanal labour that distinguishes the film production process from the solo work in the authorship of the graphic novel. While *La Face* does create a witty but powerful image of the main persona, Satrapi, who holds multiple roles in this process, it dedicates quite a lot of time and space to other creative agents as well. The *source* of the adaptation is present but not glorified. It is present in the frame of transformation and, as it expands, it is no more only the book, but the author's memories, performances, as well as the experience of other creative agents with the book that comprises the source for the adaptation. By looking at the process of adapting

Persepolis the book to the film, through this making-of, adaptation becomes more about the authorial performances and the autonomy of the new media product, rather than being a one-to-one dialogue between the two works. In other words, the much broader, multifaceted, and multi-agential dialogue that shapes any book-to-film adaptation is what is put in the spotlight.

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Notes

- a. Shirin means 'sweet' in Persian as well as being a female name. The pun is thus intended.
- b. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lkeBDYryepk>
- c. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eJmpJT_XDwI
- d. The interview was conducted on 5 April 2023.
- e. The graphic novel was published in four volumes in its original French but was turned into a two-volume publication in its English translation, with two new subtitles: the first volume, *The Story of a Childhood*, the second volume: *The Story of a Return*.
- f. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v9onZpQix_w&t=137s

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