CHAPTER TWO

Grabbing THE Werewolf: Digital Freezeframes, THE Cinematic Still AND Technologies OF THE Social

TECHNOLOGIES OF THE IMAGE—AN 'EPOCHAL CHANGE'?

Audiovisual technologies have made dramatic leaps forward in the last ten years, bringing the creative possibilities of professional sound, video and multimedia studios within reach both of schools and homes for the first time. School students are becoming the first generation of media audiences able to operate the powerful technologies of the moving image used in the production of film, television, audio CD, multimedia and hypertext. That such technologies can only be understood as operating within social processes is a point central to this chapter. It was emphasised in the early 80's by Raymond Williams, who envisaged an 'epochal change' (1981) from a period of wide accessibility to the mass media, but characterised by a relation of a few producers to many consumers, to a period in which the means of production themselves become widely distributed, leading to:

> the provision of equitable access to the means and resources of directly determined communication, serving immediate and social needs…the full mobility of a range of communications processes which in all their aspects—amplifying and connecting, storing and reminding, alternative and extending—would be the means and resources of a qualitatively different social life. (Williams, 1981: 191)

Williams makes another point of direct relevance to this chapter: that the new technologies of communication in this century (he specifies radio, telephone,

cinema and the camera) have been far less determined by formal regimes of instruction and training than print literacy, requiring only a set of relatively simple skills, informally acquired, to allow mass access. A development of this point pertinent to my argument is that these technologies have been until recently largely ignored by the pedagogies of formal education, which have, instead, stuck persistently to the technologies (and ideologies) of print literacy and literature. Now that schools are beginning to grapple with new media, they face the twin problems of coping with the need for new skills (for teachers and students), and accommodating an accompanying cultural sphere often at odds with the traditional official culture of the school.

A final introductory point is that growing competence in these technologies among young people, both in and beyond school, has become part of a long sequence of debates about literacy, debates which still oscillate between narrowly-defined models of print literacy and more widely-conceived models of plural, multimodal literacies, recognising the determining importance of social contexts (see Street, 1997; Raney, 1998). Apart from the debate about the appropriateness of the language analogy to visual and other media, important questions are raised here about what new skills might be needed, how and when they can be acquired, what kinds of metalinguistic competence might be needed by young people, and what new social and cultural contexts will frame and determine aspects of these literacies.

This chapter will examine the impact of the 'turn to the visual' and the increasing availability of digital technology, in some very specific instances of work in the secondary school classroom; also some of the social practices determining, and determined by, these events; and the cultural histories that lie behind such practices. In much of the chapter, I will concentrate on the practice of abstracting single frames from film or video. The use of the cinematic still has always appeared natural and simple—a visual quote, anchoring the point made in a review, proposing a distilled version of the film in a press kit, or enticing us into the cinema in a poster. In fact, of course, it is a complex historical process of selection, representation, and certain forms of discursive empowerment. It offers important clues about the way in which we read, transform, and re-present the images of a film: how we anticipate them, respond to them at the moment of viewing, and later recall them. It is also a form of image engaged in particular ways with the technological: from the photographs of unit stills photographers and studio portrait photographers on film sets, or the early use of 35mm frame enlargements; to recent forms of digital imaging derived from film—a historical progression of cultural uses marked by a shift from the professional-industrial sphere to the domestic, between which spheres education often finds itself positioned.

The technical apparatuses of the cinema have often been used as metaphors for the act of spectating, most extensively in the psychoanalytic screen theory of the late seventies. A valuable corrective to conceptions of an ideal, transhistorical viewer which arose from this was issued by Stephen Heath, who emphasised, like Williams, that the technological and the social are mutually determining:

> Cinema does not exist in the technological and then become this or that practice in the social; its history is a history of the technological and social together . . . , in which the ideological is there from the start. (Heath, 1980: 6)

Part of my argument in this chapter will be that the processes of production of the cinematic still can also be seen, like the technologies of filming and projection, as a kind of metaphor for, as well as a material enactment of, certain aspects of understanding film.

Traditional techniques of the cinematic still, then, interacted with their ideological purpose. Both production stills and studio 8" x 10" portraits in Hollywood constructed versions of the film texts which emphasised the star system and certain aspects of genre and narrative. By contrast, the Stenberg brothers,[1] who produced movie posters in Soviet Russia in the twenties, including posters of several of Eisenstein's films, used a projector of their own invention to enlarge frames of the film to construct representations of the film's key ideas using techniques deliberately modelled on Eisenstein's montage theory and working in the Constructivist tradition of pre-Stalinist revolutionary art.

Kress and van Leeuwen (1996: ch. 7) describe the making of texts as 'inscription', identifying three historically successive classes of inscription technology: technologies of the hand (paint, pen, print); recording technologies (of the eye and ear); and synthesising technologies, which depend on digitally manipulated developments of text. Their main point is that these successive classes allow for different kinds of textual ideologies, which move from ideologies of reference, in which the text appears simply to represent the world by reference, to ideologies of 'representation-as-design', which allow for the endless recombination of texts, and for a dissolution of the distinction between reading and writing.

The Stenbergs might seem to have anticipated this last phase, their innovative combination of frames from film and traditional technologies of inscription operating as a re-reading of film through a process of spectatorial montage made material on the surface of their huge, arresting poster designs. In other ways, however, though their approach to film perhaps opened possibilities for more democratic spectatorial engagement, they were still working within the artistic and professional sphere of movie production and distribution; and their project was, in larger ways, aligned with the period of modernism in which the artist

belonged to an élite group. They belong in the stage of Raymond Williams' scheme characterised, as we have seen, by the relation of a few producers to a mass audience.

School students equipped with digital imaging software, by contrast, belong to a period which is beginning to see a considerable shift in productive power from author to audience in ways which may be material amplifications of responses to film that have always happened in audience's minds, but which now offer the possibility of visual inscription, of making images rather than only viewing and imagining them: Kress and van Leeuwen's 'dissolution' of the reading/writing distinction. In one of the first accounts of children`s work with digital film images, Julian Sefton-Green makes this point:

> …I would want to make the larger claim that being able to handle the film in 'virtual' form, frame by frame, image by image, may transform the power relations that normally obtain between text and viewer. (1995: 63)

In the school projects I will refer to, students have used video digitiser software to digitise key sections of the films they are studying, and to grab images and drop them into their desktop-published commentaries on the film—in effect, to make their own stills, and use them for the kind of purposes that film commentators and critics have used them for throughout the history of the cinema. What does this act of appropriation mean, what does it make possible? It seems a small moment in the story of the digital revolution; but it allows for certain kinds of amplification of the ways in which we read, interpret and transform the films we watch.

In the mixed comprehensive school where this work took place, this use of digital freezeframes was a central part of a Year 9 media course, based on Neil Jordan's *Company of Wolves* (1984). The course was set up, following the feminist intentions of Angela Carter's story (1981) and screenplay, to teach how the representation of women in horror could be observed as changing, from its earlier moments in the Universal pictures of the thirties and forties, through the AIP[2] and Hammer films of the fifties and sixties, to this film of 1984, very untypical of the popular horror genre in some ways, but in other ways closely allied to it. As the course developed, it also increasingly concentrated on scenes of werewolf transformation, setting these against similar scenes from earlier films in the werewolf sub-genre, and exploring the significance of this event as a characteristic horror metaphor.

This research combined a theoretical inquiry into the semiotic nature of the still and moving image with an empirical study of three mixed-ability Year 9 classes. It took place over a period of three years, working on this Media Studies course on horror films. The study employed a broadly ethnographic approach, employing classroom journal observations, semi-structured interviews with twenty-eight students over the three years, and social semiotic analysis of students'

work with writing, image, and ICT. The context of the work was a small mixed comprehensive school in Cambridge, the first in England to be designated by the UK government as a specialist Media Arts College. While these case studies do not necessarily represent typical patterns, even among students in the UK, they do establish patterns of engagement with film and use of digital technology over a period of time, and the examples selected in this chapter are typical of patterns observed across the case studies, rather than isolated examples.

The chapter looks at four broad areas. My questions were prompted partly by observation of the way young people deal with still images from film, and partly by certain points in the history of the theory of the cinematic image, from Eisenstein's montage theory to contemporary social semiotic theory. A particular point in this history which I will discuss is the remarks made about the cinematic still by Roland Barthes in his well-known essay, 'The Third Meaning' (1978).

The first of the four areas is the question of the single image in a moving sequence, and how this is read by actual audiences (and school students in particular)—the image as a unit of meaning in the visual 'grammar' of the film; and how this meaning changes when the image is abstracted from the sequence.

The second is the question of the still image as a condensation of the film, a significant image that stands metonymically for whole sequences, important themes, sometimes even, as in a film poster, for the whole film.

The third is a particular social use of what Barthes calls 'this major artefact', the cinematic still: the still as quotation. How will this social purpose usually associated with the academy be transformed by the use by young people of freezeframe and digital selection?

The fourth question is about the role played by particular kinds of digital technology in the social communicative practices described here.

THE STILL: FROM MONTAGE THEORY TO THE SYNCHRONIC SYNTAGM

Barthes' account of the cinematic still builds on Eisenstein's well-known idea of 'vertical montage' (1968). However, where for Eisenstein this meant a vertical articulation of shot and sound-track, Barthes' new move is to suggest a vertical reading of the individual frame, below the level of the shot. This idea is developed further by recent social semiotic theorists (Hodge & Tripp, 1986; Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996), who suggest that powerful images from film operate as synchronic syntagms—moments experienced by the spectator as almost instantaneous, but which have a syntagmatic structure of their own, working at right angles, as it were, to the diachronic syntagm of the film's flow.

This sequence of theories proposes these views of the relation of image to moving sequence as part of a developing set of ideas about the power relations of audience to author. Eisenstein proposed a radical revision of text-viewer relations, in that his montage theory depended upon the spectator operating their own montage, in which the cinematic image is understood by a kind of cinematic counterpart in the mind of the viewer, who makes connections between images on the screen and other images in his/her own experience. In keeping with Eisenstein's political project, however, the (ideal) viewer's construction of meaning is invariably in harmony with the intentions of the director. Barthes is in accord with this emphasis on the power of the spectator, though his ideal viewer, again the ideal of his historical political moment, is characteristically subversive. In specific relation to the cinematic still, Barthes suggests that it offers a subversion of cinematic time: 'by instituting a reading that is at once instantaneous and vertical, [it] scorns logical time…' (page 332).

The synchronic syntagm of social semiotic theory is similarly subversive, offering the potential for viewers to stitch together their own readings of film from powerful images, producing unpredictable meanings of particular ideological potency for the spectator. In this respect it follows the stance of post-structuralist theory generally; though it grounds its claims in an analysis of young spectators' responses derived from specific sociolinguistic theories applied, in this case, to the moving image (Hodge and Tripp, 1986).

Another social semiotic analysis of the syntagmatic structure of the image, though in this case it is not the cinematic image, is offered by Kress and Van Leeuwen (1996) , who analyse images in terms of a grammar of visual design, where each element operates as part of the grammar of the image, in analogy to the elements of Halliday's functional grammar (1985). In this system, the objects and people in the picture function as participants, subjects of the action signalled by vectors of movement, and the angles and perspectives of the picture signal meanings such as point-of-view, or the system of person, as it would be in language.

The following analysis explores what evidence there might be of young people using these kinds of structure in their own interpretations of cinematic images. How does one 13 – year-old boy, Ben, use an image he has digitised? How does he read the still; how does he relate it to the moving image; is there any evidence of Barthes' gesture of denial of filmic time, or of a reading of the social semiotic elements of visual grammar?

Ben has chosen an image of a werewolf in the final stages of transformation. It is taken from a brief narrative of a werewolf bridegroom who abandons his wife on the night of their wedding, then returns years later to terrorise her and her children by her new husband. The story belongs to a third layer in the film's narrative structure: the outer layer of the onion, as it were, is an adolescent girl, dreaming the main story; the second layer—derived, via Angela Carter's short

story, from Charles Perrault's 'Red Riding Hood' (1991) and the mediaeval story which is its main antecedent[3]. The third, inner, layer is a series of tales told by the girl's grandmother (within the dream); and then by the girl herself.

Ben's choice itself is significant, then: he chooses an image which bypasses the main narrative structures of the film, an image in which usually stable identities are replaced by disturbing processes of transformation, an image which carries accreted historical meanings from traditions of cinema and folktale. How does he read this image?

Ben clearly recognizes certain properties of the still image, but his reading is everywhere informed by understandings of the moving text. He uses a number of words to describe the creature in the image—he transforms the visual sign and its nominal function into a number of nominal groups of his own. His first sentence is:

> In this image the man is in the final stages of turning into a wolf.

One noun will not suffice for the creature, of course, but two are needed: 'man' and 'wolf', signifying the syntagmatic structure of this brief narrative sequence that covers the werewolf transformation. This brief introduction also serves as a paradigmatic indication of the genre conventions that produce both the man/wolf, the werewolf, and the characteristic sequence of transformation that is a hallmark of the subgenre, from the celebrated transformation of Frederic March from Jekyll to Hyde in Rouben Mamoulian's film of 1931, to the spectacular transformation sequences of John Landis's *American Werewolf in London* (1981), both films from which the class has viewed extracts.

Later, Ben refers to the creature as 'the monster (almost wolf)', a complex nominal group that articulates cultural echoes of the spectacular nature of the creatures of the Gothic tradition with a parenthetic representation of the dynamic process of the transformation, '(almost wolf)'. Later, he calls it 'the thing', perhaps indicative of uncertainty about its ever-transforming nature; perhaps an echo of an older sci-fi horror tradition which did indeed label one of its most celebrated inventions 'The Thing'. Elsewhere he calls it 'the beast'—another choice resonant with apocalyptic horror imagery. A significant point, perhaps, about all these selections is that they relate to the genre, their ruling paradigm, in a way that the everyday word—which Ben never uses—doesn't: the word 'animal'. It's clear that the processes of re-lexicalisation Ben uses to transform the transforming werewolf aren't by any means random, but carry the social history of meanings which the Russian psychologist Lev Vygotsky described in *Thought and Language*:

> The primary word is not a straightforward symbol for a concept but rather an image, a picture, a mental sketch of a concept, a short tale about it, indeed, a small work of

> art. In naming an object by means of such a pictorial concept, man ties it into one group with a number of other objects. (1962: 75)

But the werewolf paradigm is defined, of course, not only by what it looks like but what it does—its part in the *action* which this sequence is all about. The still image, Barthes asserted, offers a kind of defiance of narrative time—but here, it seems it can only be read by reinstituting the temporal sense of the narrative syntagm, which is, of course, what Ben does, translating the actions of the wolf into verbs, which give some indication of how he reads these narrative processes. If the major participant, the werewolf, is the dominant *Actor*, then an interesting question, in terms of the transformation, is who functions as what Kress and Van Leeuwen (using the terminology of functional grammar) call the *Goal*—who's on the receiving end? The verbs make it clear that Ben perceives three Goals. One of them is the werewolf himself. That he is simultaneously the actor and the goal, the monster and the victim, is registered in the implied reflexivity of the verbs in the first few sentences: 'the man is in the final stages of turning [himself] into a wolf. He has developed [in himself] his muzzle and teeth and all that remains is for him to get his fur.' Here, as in what's often been noted in the imagery of divided identity in the horror film (Jancovich, 1992; Clover, 1993), the monster is literally divided against himself. That he appears as victim in the affective structures of the sequence is all too plain in Ben's commentary in a sentence which makes an affective articulation of the three victims of the horror—the monster, the woman in the sequence, and the viewer:

> This image is particularly gory because the monster (almost wolf) is obviously in quite a lot of pain and as the lady keeps screaming and the music is becoming quite intense it is quite distressing [to the viewer].

As this sentence indicates, the other Goals of the transformation process are the woman (not in this image, but in other parts of the sequence which Ben is obliged to describe to make sense of the threat of the creature) and the viewer, whose position is of central concern in Ben's piece.

The threat offered to the viewer is clearly crucial to the appeal of horror films, depending for their emotional impact on a masochistic audience-text relation, as Carol Clover argues (1993), in which the viewer is typically identified with victim rather than monster.[4] This image is clearly offering such a threat, snarling from the screen directly at the viewer. Does Ben register this kind of response?

He has chosen an image that addresses the viewer in a particularly direct way. Kress and van Leeuwen describe this kind of image act as a 'demand' which establishes a specific relation between two participants in the semiotic exchange:

the represented participant on the screen and the interactive participant who is the viewer:

> …the participant's gaze…demands something from the viewer, demands that the viewer enter into some kind of imaginary relation with him or her. (1996: 26)

So we might see this image as demanding a particular service from the viewer, in fact, exercising the dominant imperative of the horror genre, encapsulated in the memorable catchphrase of modern horror in David Cronenberg's remake of *The Fly* (1986), when one potential victim commands another: 'Be afraid. Be very afraid'.[5] Ben has registered this text-audience relation in his commentary. To begin with, he observes the nature of the 'demand' image quite explicitly:

> As the monster is looking almost straight at the viewer it gives the viewer the feeling that the beast is looking at them personally!

Here Ben conceives of the viewer in the third person, as if he is describing the process by which the ideal viewer, the general audience the film is addressing, becomes the actual individual spectator—as indeed it does in the next sentence, where the third person viewer gives way to the first person Ben:

> I really felt that the 'thing' was looking straight at me.

As if to complete the trinity of persons, the next sentence positions the viewer in the second person:

> This image has great significance on the film because you can suddenly believe that it is possible for a man to transform into a wolf in a few seconds.

This shifting of pronouns which represent the viewer goes on through the rest of the piece, suggesting the multiplicity of positions Ben can, and does, take up—as an individual, positioned against his knowledge of this text and others like it; as a member of a class who have shared their responses to some idea; as a pupil, discussing his response with a teacher-reader; as a member of a viewing public who might choose horror films. So we get:

> I didn't know how the makers of the film would cope with the transformation scenes
> You can tell that this wolf is out for the kill
> you think of it as being evil
> I think it makes her seem innocent

> When we watched the film I was not aware of thinking this but I am sure that the whole class were unconsciously aware of this.

These lexicogrammatical choices, the nouns and pronouns which represent audience-text relations in Ben's writing, demonstrate the irreducibly social nature of this textual engagement. This aspect of his engagement with the text depends on a social viewing, made up of a diverse group of peers in the classroom, in a context caught between their own cultural affiliations and the educational project of the school. It also recognises, even constructs, a more abstract ideal viewer, who belongs to that aspect of the commentary closer to the abstract levels of critical analysis promoted by the school context.

It looks, then, from this analysis of Ben's work as if the grammar of the still image is everywhere informed by that of the moving sequence; though the text is not read as it presumably is at the moment of viewing. This is a rereading, a transformation; the digital freezing of the image allows for an anatomy of the elements of the frame. There's a sense in which Barthes' disobedient attitude to narrative time fits. Certainly, the 'realtime' of the film is suspended, and the diachronic sequence is undone in the digital unstitching of the film's sequence, and the abstraction of a series of frames, of which this is one. The strict temporality of the viewing is replaced by a different temporality, that of the interpretive performance, recasting the film narrative in the dominant present tense of exegesis, freezing the image for anatomical investigation.

Does he make any comment on the particular power of the synchronic syntagm? The meanings tied up in his choice, the pleasure presumably contained in the scene—these unspoken meanings will be those described by Hodge and Kress (1988) as the aspects of the synchronic syntagm peculiarly resistant to decoding. Ben has clearly opted for the most powerful image of the body-horror paradigm that Jordan borrows from the popular horror tradition, characterized by excess and a refusal of the sublimated aesthetic that Philip Brophy, in a condemnation of the body-horror of Cronenberg and others, describes approvingly as 'the Hitchcock debt' (1986). Ben's recognition of the power of this image is registered in the affective binding of spectator to image act, and in the diversity of his rendering in language of the werewolf paradigm. His lexicogrammatical choices also locate the act of viewing in specific social and cultural circumstances, reflecting the ideal viewer of the quasi-academic textual analysis as well as the actual spectators: the diverse group of peers watching the film with him.

PART FOR WHOLE: SYNCHRONIC SYNTAGMS 2

My second question was about the still image as a condensation of the film, a metonymic substitution for whole sequences, important themes, even the whole film.

We might borrow from Eisenstein's account a view of montage, not only as the compositional process of juxtaposing and superimposing images but also as the process by which a reader makes their own reading of the text by appropriating key images, reordering and restructuring them to produce their own remembered version of the film.

Barthes approaches the problem the other way round, describing the still as '…the fragment of a second text whose existence never exceeds the fragment', suggesting that film and still are in a palimpsest relationship, '…without it being possible to say that one is on top of the other or that one is extracted from the other.' (1978: 332)

He seems to be suggesting that each still, and the process of selecting it, provides the reader in question with one of an infinite number of texts, dependent in some ways on the whole, in other ways independent, always a new text, condensed into the still, able, presumably, to be released into conscious thought by explication.

Gemma and Ellie, two 13-year-old students, have digitised three images. The first shows the heroine, Rosaleen, asleep in her bedroom at the start of the film. She's a contemporary heroine, wrapped like an envelope around Angela Carter's original story, providing a new narrative frame, as it's her dream that contains the story of *The Company of Wolves*.

Their second image is of the werewolf-hunter, as he meets Rosaleen in the wood on the way to her grandmother's.

Their third is of the wolf that once was Rosaleen, after a transformation that she has invited, even controlled, in order to gain access to the world of adult sexuality that the werewolves appear to represent.

In a sense this selection is their own condensation of the entire film, bound up with the consciousness of the character they're interested in. They have chosen images that concentrate on the girl. The first positions her, as it were, in the first person, dreaming the story. The second locates her in the second person, addressed by the hunter, imagined as the reverse of the shot. The third, in the third person, makes her the object of the action, object of the werewolf transformation, object of the attack with a gun from her father who doesn't recognise her, saved by her mother who does, alerted by the cross around her neck.

The reading of the film represented by such a selection highlights the fairytale element, the point-of-view of the contemporary teenage girl, and the deeply

ambiguous role of the girl protagonist in relation to the monster/victim axis of modern horror movies. Several commentators, including Stephen King himself (1982), have noted how, in films from the late seventies onwards (with Brian de Palma's film version of King's *Carrie* (1976) as a landmark, perhaps) female characters have occupied victim roles much more ambiguously, with such roles blurring into traditionally male hero functions, or into the role of the monster, or sometimes (again, Carrie is the classic example), all three.

So their condensed image of the film reads it as a film about a girl growing up, predominantly; the spectacular horror of the werewolf transformation scenes is marginalised. Ben's reading, on the other hand, places the film closer to contemporary body horror, selecting the most replete image of horror, foregrounding the images closest to popular horror, furthest from the art-house style of much of the fantasy.

All of this, it seems to me, is a detailed and explicit reading of those features of the visual text that would be noted first by the reader in a much more condensed way, perhaps unconsciously, or more accurately *preconsciously*, to use Freud's distinction (1915) between the repressed unconscious and that which is waiting to become conscious. So we might envisage this reading of the film which uses a still image supported by a written commentary, as a kind of triple movement: first, the reader recollects the image mentally; then she finds it, and fixes it (though this process, involving the often long and complex business of fast forward, rewind and freezeframe before the digitiser is even brought into play, has its own narrative of textual engagement), thereby condensing an understanding of an aspect of the film into one synchronic syntagm which metonymically represents, in this case, the protagonist/narrator. Thirdly, the condensation effect is reversed, as they unpack the meanings of the image, resituating it in their own version of the narrative syntagm, and elaborating the elements of the image and their significance in both synchronic and diachronic dimensions. All of this, it's important to reiterate, takes place in specifically social contexts. I have described elsewhere (Burn, 1996) how the engagement with the film text can begin with gestures and facial expressions by viewers, oriented on the one hand towards the fictional characters on screen, setting up patterns of proximity and identification; and on the other hand towards other viewers, again establishing proximity and shared experience of the text; or distance and disputed interpretations.

The digital production, then, of still frames and a detailed commentary on them, is not dissimilar from what viewers do informally—retain key images, reorder them mentally, discuss them with friends ('What about the bit where…?'). So the classroom operates as an amplification, a rehearsal, an explication, a bringing into consciousness, of processes that happen in the social context outside the classroom anyway. The 'very easily learned skills' Williams (1981: 189) described

are being adopted and extended, with the advent of digital technologies and their emphasis on newly accessible forms of production, by the institutions of training and education.

SOCIAL USES: STILLS AS TEMPTATION AND QUOTATION

Barthes' notes on the cinematic still begin with some speculations about its fascination, rooted, as so often with Barthes, in his own behaviour. In this quite personal account, he evokes the part that stills play in the small social history that is the individual's experience of a film. All parts of this social history are important, as is recognised by later cultural theory, especially in the Cultural Studies tradition—so the fact that Barthes describes himself looking at stills in the pages of *Cahiers du Cinema*, or outside a cinema, immediately affects the kinds of meanings that might be made from such images as opposed to, say, images of Will Smith, Sigourney Weaver, or John Travolta on the walls of a Blockbuster video store.

The pleasures evoked here are the pleasures of particular individual tastes, socially formed, acceded to, contested or transformed. As Bourdieu describes (1984), they may have their roots in formations of social class, in traditions of elite or popular taste, but they are at least modifiable. In any case, the immediate or gradual recognition that 'this will be a film I'll enjoy' begins here.

So the still image offers a pre-reading of the film, to the viewer who lingers outside the cinema, or browses though a film guide, or reads the previews in the TV magazines. No control over the material production of the still here—it is firmly locked within the institutional practices of the media. But the powerful play of audience pleasures, choices, and generic expertise has started, as spectators make the dialogic connections between these pre-spectatorial images and the after-images in their minds of related texts they have viewed in the past.

Barthes also recognises that the still is a kind of quotation. This use, related to the academy as well as to the marketing and publicity mechanisms of the film industry, marks the movement from spontaneous to scientific understandings of media texts, to use Vygotsky's terms. To this extent, students use the still as a quotation, in what's often a self-consciously expository text in quasi-academic mode. Unlike Barthes, however—indeed, unlike a good deal of academic commentary on film—they have chosen their own exact images, rather than relying on stills libraries, which in turn rely on the processes of selection involved in the work of the stills photographer, producing photographs which may not even be frames from the film, at least in their traditional form.

Gemma and Ellie's commentary, though far from a traditional expository essay, makes the nature of textuality its explicit theme, and thus its partial motive

for the selection of the images. In their piece, there are the vocabularies and structures of quasi-academic discourse:

> …it is symbolic of her…
> …panning around her face…
> …closeup of each of her toys…
> …it gives the indication that…

But there are other voices in their piece, voices of popular, informal comment and judgement, suggesting other motivations for the selection of the images:

> …she was new at putting makeup on…
> …the hunky hunter which has now turned into a wolf.
> …Her granny told her to stay away from men whose eyebrows join but she didn't pay any attention to what she said but is totally blown over by him and his charms.
> …You can tell from the beginning that he is a slimy prat who just wants to eat her, the silly thing is that she totally falls head over heals [sic] about him.

Such a hybrid discourse signals a corresponding mixture of social intentions, what Mikhail Bakhtin calls 'the speech will', determining the 'compositional and stylistic features' (1952–3) of the utterance. They're simultaneously addressing a peer, as in an informal discussion of the film, peppered with indignation and concrete social detail; and a teacher, or academic system, and its expectations of formality. Speakers and writers, especially schoolchildren, are much more likely to have a mixture of motives than some kind of pure or authentic intention, and their speech and writing is bound to polyphonically suggest this. Teachers need to help them clarify their intentions, and find the representational resources to carry them out. If that makes for hybrid and contradictory discourses, we need to live with these, at least provisionally, without becoming censorious, which would only drive the contradictions underground. Bakhtin's view of language expresses just this tolerance of contradiction:

> Such is the fleeting language of a day, of an epoch, a social group, a genre, a school and so forth. It is possible to give a concrete and detailed analysis of any utterance, once having exposed it as a contradiction-ridden, tension-filled unity of two embattled tendencies in the life of language. (1981: 271)

Like Barthes, then, Gemma and Ellie's use of the stills is partly rooted in personal pleasures, and partly in a development from these into a more formal process of interpretation and enquiry. For these girls, as for all of the students in this study, both these pleasures and this growing process of interpretation are located in the process of searching and digitising, the older technologies of film editing and

exhibition now converging on the computer screen. An interview with one pair of boys as they search for the images they want shows clearly both how the search grows out of a clear series of 'mental stills' already in Graeme's mind; and also how far the process of interpretation has already come, even before the image is found:

> Graeme: And, um, the images we're looking for right now is one from the third transformation scene where a wolf comes out from the mouth of the werewolf, and, um, sort of symbolising that the wolf is inside the person, and, er, I think we're looking for—right when the wolf's nose is sticking out of his mouth.

Another pair of boys are searching for an image in *Aliens* (Cameron, 1986) of a victim of the creature stuck to a wall, about to be ruptured by the alien inside her, begging to be killed. One of the boys, a student with extensive specific literacy problems, explains that he wants this image, remembered from home viewing of *Aliens*, because the image of the monster erupting from inside the person is 'like the *Company of Wolves*—they all come from inside the person'.

The social spaces in school all play a part in the constructions of meaning and the subjectivities involved in these acts of semiosis. The darkened classroom with the bright screen, a hybrid spectatorial space, with something of the reverential hush of the concert-hall, something of the noise and interactivity of the multiplex, something of the formality of the public sphere, something of the closeness of the domestic. The groups of pupils round computer screens; who gets to operate the mouse; how the decision is reached about which frame to grab. The public nature of the electronic page; the social decision-making about design, information, what looks good. These contexts help determine the contingency of these teenage engagements with film. And they are the ambiguous, borderline spaces in which Gemma and Ellie use the still as visual quotation, poised between the analytical repertoires of formal education and the pleasures of popular fiction and film.

TRAILER-MAKING: TECHNOLOGIES OF THE STILL AND MOVING IMAGE

Gemma and Ellie, with another friend, Alex, go on to make a trailer of *The Company of Wolves*, which takes their use of the still a stage further. Although they use an analogue editing suite, this particular work employs digital effects produced in real time by a vision mixer. The trailer makes extensive use of the digital still function and the dissolve function of the vision mixer—they dissolve very slowly, lingering on superimpositions of one shot on another. Their first sequence consists

of two digital stills, showing two closeups of female characters: Rosaleen's dead sister, and the grandmother.

These have been mixed with, respectively, a scene of wolves running through the forest, and the first werewolf transformation scene. The mix makes the images of the female characters a little more 'solid' than the moving scenes, which, in addition to the fact that they are closeups, makes these images stronger in the whole composition, an example of the salience used by Kress and van Leeuwen (1996) to denote relative weightings of elements of visual composition. This reordering of and selection from the film text not only creates a new montage, then, but a new synchronic syntagm, which depends for its meaning on the articulation of two images related by another kind of 'vertical montage', one which constructs the impression of an image laid on top of another. The selection of the female characters, followed by another still of Rosaleen's face, seems, in the light of the work of these girls, as well as the discussions of the representation of women in the film, to signify their recognition of the importance of these related female roles: victim/sister; narrator/wise woman; strong heroine and dreaming narrator. It makes explicit the narrative envelope of the film, and foregrounds the representation of teenage female identity that, for these viewers, is at the centre of the text and their engagement with it, and now, their literal remaking of it.

CONCLUSION: DIGITAL COTTAGE INDUSTRIES OF THE FUTURE[6]

I have argued that the use of images digitally abstracted from film (at least in this particular educational context) can usefully be seen in relation to the cultural history of the cinematic still. Isolating film frames as a kind of secondary production for purposes of marketing and academic commentary also involves a history of social and cultural practices to do with the preview and review of film, practices with their counterparts in the minds and social exchanges of spectators.

The new ability to digitally undo and reconstruct still and moving image (and audio) enables the students I have described to become writers as well as readers of the visual—indeed, these settled distinctions begin to unravel. The literacies of the visual semiotic they have acquired become extended in the digital manipulation of image and moving image, and in the transcoding of image to word and back again, in group discussion and written commentary. The mental act of spectating becomes concrete in the digital frame and sequence; the plasticity and provisionality of the digital timeline begin to measure up to the ultimate plasticity of the mental image act. The computer screen, the magnetic centre of excited discussion and group production, has replaced the projection apparatus of seventies

Screen theory's metaphors of the spectatorial act—and in this new screen, the acts of unmaking, making and projection of film now converge. The large-scale industrial processes of film shrink to the digital cottage industry in which these students make small, local understandings of film but also connect to global understandings, downloading movie posters, information, film reviews from the internet. The slow, incremental transformation of subjectivity involved in engagement with film finds new pleasures and powers in the anatomisation and reconstitution of image, always gesturing backwards to the cultural histories of film condensation—the still and the trailer—as well as forwards to a future where these forms of production, as Williams predicted, are themselves widely distributed. The tools of digital inscription are becoming, as Sefton-Green has suggested (1999: 29), the new writing, with the possibility of democratised access to complex forms of media production.

How we move forward with this in schools and colleges is still unclear. The skills needed can clearly be taught. We need to recognise, though, that there are still informally-acquired skills of production, and that if anything, these will grow as software designers create increasingly intuitive programs, improving the extent to which visual interfaces provide accurate metaphors for mental processes. At the same time, a cultural theory is needed which describes how communicative practices rooted in popular media will always require complexly-negotiated dialogue between domains of work, home and leisure, and a new language of understanding and analysis, perhaps analogous to grammars of the word. We seem to have arrived at an extended version of Williams' historic moment of 1981, 'when the relations between communications technologies and social institutions are a matter not only for study and analysis, but for a wide set of practical choices.' (Williams, 1981: 192).