

Envisaging 'Visualisation': Some challenges from the international *Lord of the Rings* audience project

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Introduction

This essay explores a series of issues which have emerged around the term 'visualisation' as a result of materials generated out of the international *Lord of the Rings* audience project. 'Visualisation' is quite widely used as a term in film studies, but (apart from some quite precise meanings in production) not much considered. In this essay I begin from some elements of empirical evidence, and through some unlikely encounters that these spurred with bodies of work from outside film studies, I develop an argument for a new approach to thinking about 'visualisation'. This approach would reach a long way and have wide implications, not least for the ways we think about and research film audiences, and for the ways we approach adaptation studies. Therefore the essay is as much a report on a journey of ideas, and a set of proposals, as it is a claim to a demonstration.

Talking of 'visualisation' in *The Lord of the Rings* (1)

Consider the following interview extracts:

James: I think you can always shut your eyes and see your own sort of place, but to see it in front of you, then you're getting the complete experience of it. I mean, there is *some* bits in the book that I can imagine more vividly than others, and you know there are some bits that actually you sort of almost sort of skim by now, and then to see them sort of placed, things like Minas Morgul, that was really good to see somebody else's interpretation, and that was something totally different from the way that I interpreted it and then the next time, you know, I flick back to the book just to read the chapters and then all of a sudden, you know, find myself incorporating a couple of things out of Peter Jackson's sort of vision on that as well. Yeah, I think it's quite important to be able to see it and then visualise it, and *especially* the *sound*, the sound's the most important thing, cos that sort of completes the entire experience.

Stella: To start with, I am a bibliophile really, you know, and the reason I am is because you can get your own personalised vision, don't you, and having read the books so many times, that vision [pause - searching for a word] for whatever reason, it comes into your head in the first instance, is then built upon, you know until you built this whole world for yourself in your head that that you see. And I think that one of the reasons that I enjoyed the film was that Peter Jackson made very evident the scope, the geographical scope of the whole story, because I mean looking at the maps, in the books, it it's a long way, it's a good distance you know, from the Shire to Mordor and Peter Jackson's filmography, it absolutely gave you the whole sense of the distance. And it made me think of, it just *agreed* with my vision of it, the greenery of the Shire, the whole home-ness of it, if you like, yeah it was Middle England to me, the Shire is very much Middle England, you know, shades of Derbyshire, but then I grew up there, and then as the *story* darkens, as the story becomes darker, so do his distances become more immense, and the scale of the people against this landscape, the people, they don't diminish but the landscape becomes larger, and the landscape in *many* cases is part of the battle, like for example you know, the landscape itself is part of the battle and he shows that so well. I was afraid, I think, I was afraid that some, this sound awful and I'm sorry, but that some American would get hold of the film you know, and then it would be all prairie land and, you know, just terribly terribly Americanised and it's something that as an English person, and I'm not being racist here, I'm being parochial I think, but an English person would not be able to identify with, whereas one can identify quite strongly, even though it's New Zealand, one can identify quite strongly with the with the landscapes etcetera in the film. So, geographically, it was wonderful, the filmography was wonderful.

Marianne: [S]ometimes when I read the book, I just couldn't *quite* picture how it should *look* for example with erm Minas Tirith [pause], I just [pause], I *read* the description in the book and I just couldn't visualise it at *all* as soon as I *saw* how they visualised it in the film, it just sort *all* fitted into place and it all made *sense* and the different bits of the story that *happened* there, sort of, I suddenly *realised* how it all fitted together, which I hadn't *really* done before [pause], and so the first, espe... the one, the first two films lock the different bits like that sort of, made the *book* fit in to place *better* [pause], *and* I wanted to see *how* they imagined the third one, *how* [pause] *they* thought it should look because I thought the first two films were so well done and it was actually quite close to how *I* imagined things and it clarified it all for me, so I thought well, I just want to see *how* they imagined the third film [pause], couldn't like [pause], if it goes on consistently with the first two sort of thing.

Fran: Er, I think it was different because I was able to visualise more of the things that Tolkien had described, and like the landscapes and things when I first read the book I didn't really know what ... Tolkien was getting at but then after watching the movies I thought that ... I had a better idea of how Tolkien saw the things he'd written about which made it ... more interesting to read. [...] I think so, er, because I can recognise parts of the books that were clearly in the film, yeah, it just made it easier to visualise and easier to understand. [...] Er, I think the second book, kind of without seeing the film, I felt it took a long time to for something to happen just because it's the middle book, so there's not really a conclusion or a beginning. But then after watching the film because I was able to visualise everything and I was able to follow kind of more what was going on and where the characters were headed to it made it easier to read.

These extracts all come from interviews conducted in the third and final phase of our research project into audience responses to the film adaptation of *The Lord of the Rings*.¹

¹ This research project, involving research groups in 20 countries around the world, had three phases. In the first, many research groups gathered as wide a range of information on prefigurative materials (publicity and marketing, merchandising, and media coverage) as they were able. The second phase, common to all groups, involved a questionnaire: made available and publicised on the web, it was also in some countries handed out outside selected cinemas. In this way, just under 25,000 completed responses were entered into a searchable database. The third phase, carried out

Separately and together, they raise questions concerning the meanings and implications of 'visualisation' as part of the processes whereby films enact stories, and whereby audiences build accounts of, and responses to, those films.

'Visualisation' was an issue which our audiences wanted to talk about. In our questionnaire responses, although no individual question asked specifically about this, more than 300 answers introduced the term 'visualisation'.² Searches under the same terms translated into other languages used in our project would for sure have located more. And the addition of some related expressions – 'imaginative world', 'realisation', 'coming alive' among others – would again have multiplied the identified responses. All these expressions allow people to talk about the ways in which they conduct imaginative operations around the film. But what sorts of operations these are, and what implications they have, is what this essay addresses. The extracts above, which were chosen precisely because they do raise good preliminary questions, immediately pose some topics for consideration:

1. It is not difficult to identify a number of suggestive moves and premises in these extracts. There is, first, the sense that 'visualisation' helps viewers solve narrative puzzles – Marianne's 'clarified it all for me', and Fran's 'I was able to follow kind of more' attest to this. Second, there is a sense that 'visualisation' contributes to a viewer's motivation for participating and their sense of *belonging* in the fictional world – Stella's 'personalised' vision is a stronger version of Marianne's 'more interesting to read' in this sense. Next, it is not so much detailed components that are 'visualised' as how they assemble into wholes – James' 'complete', Stella's 'scope' and 'whole sense', and Marianne's 'it all fitted together' all point here. And finally, these are valued as *achievements*, non-automatic outcomes to be aimed for.
2. But what is the force of the term 'visual' in here, when James can gloss this as referring to the 'sound, especially'? The English language, perhaps more than many others, has sedimented within itself a range of expressions which appear to privilege the visual over other senses.³ 'I see what you mean' does not require any reference to the eyes or visual cortex. Nor does the concept of the 'mind's eye'. A number of historians of ideas have suggested that European culture, quite widely, has gone through a period in which the 'visual' has come to be seen as the primary sensory mechanism and route. Empiricism, it is argued, placed particular value on visual evidence as our means of

in only a few countries, involved selecting individuals after database searches to locate patterns, for in-depth interview.

² This was an indicative search only. Using ACCESS's facility to permit searches for partial terms, I gathered all responses, in any language, which included the incomplete word 'visuali'. Luckily, this captures cognate expressions in English, Danish, Dutch, French and Spanish. This excludes, then, nine other languages in which we received responses.

³ The history of the 'visual' within Western culture is complicated, and controversial. See for instance Martin Jay (1993), but see also his partial self-critique in Brennan & Jay (1996).

access to the world beyond us. Whatever the truth of these claims, we need to beware of treating the 'visual' in 'visualisation' too literally.

3. We cannot pass up the repeated component of *pleasure in comparisons*. (James: 'It was really good to see someone else's interpretation'; Stella: '... one of the reasons I enjoyed the film so much ...') This raises an interesting issue about the senses in which 'visualisation' may importantly be shared and collective, as against personal and private. Yet the predominant traditions for thinking about 'visualisation' have emphasised the personal and private nature of visualising and imagination.

There are many other points it would be possible to make, just from these extracts. But what is not yet clear is the sorts of content that a 'visualisation' has, and how these might relate to the (perhaps different) ways in which books and films offer possibilities to audiences for imaginative engagement. In short, is 'visualisation' an otiose term for understanding film audiences, when film is by nature a visual medium?

'Visualisation' and discourses around film

The term 'visualisation' has had a variety of meanings in discourses round film. The most common has to do with all the processes involved in moving from script to screenplay to film. Within this, a distinction operates between pre-visualisation (which includes storyboarding and conceptual design), and visualisation (which covers a wide range from film stock, locations, costume, lighting, set design, camerawork and so on). Partly arising from these come a set of uses, often closely associated with film reviewing, which address the overall look and feel of a film, and the distinctive point of view it enunciates. This sense of a film as an 'imaginative realisation' can be seen at work in these internet reviews:

The design and visualisation of the sets is brilliant as always with Kurosawa's films and much credit for the look must go to cinematographer Kuzua Miyagawa who worked with this director for many years.⁴

The film makes most sense as a visualisation of the memories of its central character, Galoup (Lavant), a tough little mid-ranking officer in the French Foreign Legion, stationed in the remote African ex-colonial outpost of Djibouti. There's very little dialogue in the film, instead we hear extracts from Galoup's diary, written later on his return to civilian life, in Marseille as he reviews the events of his recent life.⁵

⁴ Review of *Yojimbo*, Jersey Film Society (found at http://www.mnlg.com/jfs/next_film/next_film_16.php, 19 May 2006).

⁵ Review of *Beau Travail*, Neil Young's Film Lounge (found at <http://www.jigsawlounge.co.uk/film/beautravail.html>, accessed 19 May 2006).

'When Ridley Scott and Harrison Ford were at peak of their respective powers, Scott did a little sci-fi movie in the backlot of 20th Century Fox. Initially, a slow earner at the box office, *Blade Runner* quickly earned its status as a cinema and science fiction classic, and a cash cow for Fox merchandising. Perhaps the sheer perfection of the movie's visualisation has put off the day of a licensed game to now.'⁶

The emphasis in each of these is on the *achievement* of a visualisation, something which establishes its value. But there is not a single criterion at work here. And sometimes in reviews there is a play around the possibilities. Here, a review of *Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* tries to put its finger on a felt shortfall:

'Film adaptations of books are always a melting pot of opinions and all too often the opinion most resistant to melting is that justice has not been done. So is *The Hitch Hikers Guide To The Galaxy* another culprit to add to the list? Disappointingly, although not said without some reservation, the answer is yes. The question of why is what poses a problem. The elements that usually harm an adaptation such as this all seem to have been addressed. Let's start with the cast. Ok, so maybe Arthur is a little young, Trillian is American and most readers would never have imagined Mos Def in the role of Ford Prefect, but they do all bring something positive to their roles and any niggles are generally minor ones that soon dissipate. The supporting cast also appear well chosen. Sam Rockwell brings the expected crazy-coolness to Zaphod, while Bill Nighy and Alan Rickman, as Slartibartfast and the voice of Marvin respectively, are particular highlights. So if it's not the cast it must be the visualisation of it? All too often you read a book and your own imagination is hideously undercut when the page transfers to the screen. No, not that either. The sets look great, the Jim Henson workshop has done a fantastic job of the various aliens and the overall presentation and effects are hard to fault. Right, so it's not the cast, it's not the visualisation or the effects. Must be the humour? Getting warmer, but not quite there.'⁷

What are the components here? First, the review as a whole is a debate upon the (de)merits of an adaptation. But 'visualisation' is distinguished from particular character-embodiments. This is here reserved for a more general appraisal of page-screen relations – which does not, however, include the 'tone' (humour) of the film. What we see from this is that 'visualisation' is, in popular usage, a very mobile, negotiable term.

⁶ Found at <http://www.computerandvideogames.com/article.php?id=8090> accessed 19 May 2006.

⁷ Game review found at http://www.funny.co.uk/tv-radio-film-comedy/art_58-3375-Film-Review-The-Hitch-Hikers-Guide-To-The-Galaxy.html, accessed 19 May 2006.

'Visualisation' in adaptation studies

The common component, though, in all these forms of talk is that 'visualisation' relates most readily to assessments of adaptations. And here, academic film studies comes more into play. There is of course a long history of scholarly work on adaptations. But over the last twenty years, and particularly recently, a substantial shift has taken place in the nature of this work. Despite the resistance of those associated with a journal like *Literature/Film Quarterly*, there has been a move away from the traditional twin starting points: the assumed hierarchy of sources (privileging the literary, of course); and 'fidelity'. We can usefully take Robert Stam's two recent books to test the temperature of the current state of play. Stam's edited (2005b) collection of essays displays two main tendencies. The first is the wish to evaluate what we might call the *ideological significance* of an adaptation, or in other words to explore the ways in which through representation or narrative social and cultural themes are differently worked through in versions of a story. The second is the urge to seek the *intertextual resources* upon which a version draws – including, of course, earlier and other versions of the same story. (These two can and do, of course, combine in particular cases.) Yet, despite repeated powerful critiques, the issue of 'fidelity' (how far can and should film adaptations try to be 'true' to their source – and indeed what does this mean?) has kept returning. Most interestingly Robert Stam's own accompanying (2005a – see his Introduction, especially) reconsideration of the field cannot quite get rid of this notion. And this may be because, unlike the intertextual approach, it does permit and indeed invite *evaluations*. It is of course true that 'ideological' accounts permit some evaluations – providing one shares the political position from which a writer critiques a film. But 'intertextuality' really only draws attention to complexities, and hints at the knowledge-requirements on audiences. 'Fidelity', however troublesome, still permits judgements on whether an adaptation is a *good* one.

Direct claims about 'visualisation' within adaptation theory, though, belong largely to the 'out-going' literary approach. There, it was not uncommon to meet claims that films might *interrupt* or *spoil* imaginative processes set underway by book-reading⁸. For an example, consider an essay by Sara Martin (2005). Writing about the cinematic adaptations

⁸ A curious and revealing parallel exists, but is not explored, in the relations between play-scripts and performances. In the UK especially, there is a powerful tradition in which the text of the play is treated with a seriousness, and has assured status, while the performed play is evanescent and marginalized. The force of this current shows in the comparative status of English and Drama as subjects and departments in schools and universities.

of Emily Bronte's *Wuthering Heights*, Martin argues that film adaptations almost inevitably cause problems for committed book-readers, because a film can *embody* characters too strongly, and also *inflect* audiences' perceptions of characters too strongly in a particular direction – and, she implies, almost certainly at odds with their impressions derived from the book itself. So, she writes inter alia that 'film gains the upper hand when the reader can no longer return to his/her initial visualisation of the novel' (55). Effectively, she is posing the need to *struggle* to sustain a kind of 'visualisation' achieved through the literary engagement. This supposition reveals a number of assumptions at work, which are common to this kind of work. It supposes that the book comes first, both chronologically (although in practice many people read books after encountering their film adaptations), and in value. It supposes that a viewer's imagined world derived from a book or film is a fixed quantity. Once 'full', there can only be conflict. Audiences will have difficulty, at best, working with two separate imaginative experiences. It is often routinely supposed in work of this kind that the book-sourced imaginative 'visualisation' is superior because it is presumed to 'take more work' (films make it too easy), and to be personal and special to the individual. Thus it supposes, too, that such encounters are essentially *individual* – that a reader, on her or his own wants to construct his/her own, separate imaginative picture. Privatised imagination is being valued over any form of collective imagining, in which people might value and learn from diversity, dialogue, mutual testing, and shared visions (and yes, that's another eye-centred metaphor).⁹

'Visualisation' outside film studies

This is about as far as the concept of 'visualisation' has travelled in film studies.¹⁰ But outside our domain, there has been a great deal of thinking, research and debate, in particular around the ideas of 'mental imaging'.¹¹ For my purposes I am most interested in here in several distinct strands of this work that have sought to determine the

⁹ For a book which takes an unusual line here, see Wertsch, 2002.

¹⁰ It is of course inevitable that I must at least note the existence of a whole tradition of work in which the 'visual' is associated with speculative accounts of 'the gaze'. This tradition has, in my estimation, been absurdly and perilously over-influential within film studies. Belonging more that it would ever dare admit to some very old-fashioned puritanical fears about the 'dangers of seeing', this tradition is also vehemently anti-empirical. For these and many more reasons, I do not discuss it here.

¹¹ For a wide-ranging and very thoughtful examination of a vast amount of this work, see Nigel Thomas, 'Mental Imagery', available at <http://www.imagery-imagination.com/> (accessed 20 July 2006). See also the *Journal of Mental Imagery* (1977–), an important source for many of these debates although, curiously, with very few contributions considering the role of the media in relation to mental images.

effectiveness of imaging, and thence some of its distinctive *characteristics*. Each, it seems, has had to struggle against continuing opposition to establish the *reality* (are there such things at all?), their *significance* (if they do exist, are they not just empty epiphenomena?), and their *functional impact* (do they make measurable contributions to human responses and learning?). I have located three main strands of such work: within language-learning; within cognitive psychology (and thence brain science); and within literary response theory.

(1) In the field of language learning research, first, there has been considerable interest in the ways in which people's learning might be facilitated by making use of their ability to visualise, in order to overcome costly 'word-by-word' learning and performance strategies. Tomlinson and Avila (forthcoming, 2007) have summarised a great deal of this research, and helpfully list a whole range of skills which visualisation has been shown to benefit – from practical decision-making (how do I decide on a best route?) to fleshed out understandings of situations. They draw upon a wide range of research studies, including a number which are central to my second strand of work relating to 'visualisation'.

An essay by Jane Arnold (1999) partly covers the same ground, but introduces one or two further suggestive ideas. She too focuses her argument around the benefits 'visualisation' can bring to language learning. This is, she argues, because internal visual images are affect-laden in that they associate an imagined scene with things or events of importance to us, and thus make the associated words and expressions more meaningful to us. She reminds that while the term 'visualisation' suggests connections with sight, in fact imaging can as well involve sound, touch, smell and so on. Arnold lists a series of factors which can allow the effective use in learning of 'guided imagery' (272). These include relaxation, confidence, and empathy; and the achievement of imagistic learning is said to increase creativity, flexibility, and self-confidence as well as learning itself. In one particular respect, Arnold's review goes beyond Tomlinson and Avila's, in introducing the idea that imaging may work particularly effectively where people are able to *images themselves* performing a language task (269). The implication that our own involvement might become a self-conscious part of visualisation is, we will see, an intriguing one.

Sadly, Arnold also betrays a standard prejudice. Her opening discussion of 'visualisation' includes the following: 'If, after seeing a film, we comment that the book is better, it may in part be due to the greater scope of the written version, but it is also very likely to be because as we read the work, we form mental images that satisfy us more than the images we see on the screen' (260). This intrusive adoption hints at the degree to which this kind of work may actually be modelled on a broader, ontological account of 'visualisation' which I wish to challenge.

(2) In a largely unrelated development, cognitive researchers in the USA have for many years argued over the role of 'mental images' within individuals' learning abilities. Following the move away from behaviourism, within which mental phenomena, if admitted at all, were mere epiphenomena, internal processes struggled back onto the research agenda. One researcher in particular, Stephen Kosslyn, has spent many years researching and arguing on the topic. Early on, he defended the reality of the phenomenon against critics who persistently reinterpreted phenomena as 'tacit knowledge', for instance, or as misunderstood propositional knowledge.¹² Then, using careful psychological experimentation, he explored the ways in which individuals' ability to conceive qualities such as distance, shape, dimensions, and speed were related to their capacity to image these. This coupled with a growing interest in the properties of the images themselves – how far they need to resemble that which they depict, how 'complete' they need to be to function effectively, and so on. In later phases of research, Kosslyn and various colleagues have turned to neurological science, to locate those regions of the brain activated as people work with images (see Kosslyn et al, 2006).

(3) Most obviously relevant to my interests is the work brought together by Ellen Esrock (1994), who has defended the relevance and value of imaging to our understanding of

¹² It is interesting how frequently such work has had to stray into the field of philosophy. Kosslyn et al not only report in detail many experiments identifying the nature and role of mental images – for instance, that reaction times to puzzle-solving are slower where people have been asked to imagine objects further away from themselves, because they have to 'travel' to their images of the object. They also have to discuss at some length such things as the critics' conundrum that for there to be images of the kind they conceive, there will also have to be a 'mind's eye' to view them ... and another to view the results of those acts ... and so on. Their solution to this, curiously, looks like a retreat into computer-conceived version of faculty psychology: 'We can think of the "mind's eye" as a processor that interprets depictive representations ... When these interpretive processes are applied to a remembered perceptual information instead of information that is provided online by the senses, an image rather than a precept will be expressed'. (2006: 40)

literary response. Esrock's work is something of a tour de force re-examination of 20th century literary, linguistic and psychological and philosophical thought for the ways in which these have tended, in discrete ways, to deny or marginalize 'visualisation'. She examines *inter alia* the phenomenologists; semiotic traditions; various kinds of formalist accounts; the psychoanalytic tradition; and a range of other individual critics and writers. She also evaluates a wide range of empirical research, including that of Kosslyn and Victor Nell,¹³ in order to secure the grounds for the importance of visual imaging in the reading process.

Disappointingly to me, at the precise point where she has completed her judicious considerations of a wide range of theory and research on the topic, she turns away from *actual* reader-responses. Instead, in her final chapter, she provides a rather traditional exegesis of the textual demands of certain proffered literary examples. And the conclusions she offers arise more from these textual considerations than they do from her earlier arguments.

A considerable proportion of all these three kinds of work belongs simply to each distinct domain, and only makes sense there. Even so, we can derive some general principles from all this work:

1. Mental imaging or visualising can be understood as a natural, perhaps even necessary, process associated with many kinds of cognitive learning and skills acquisition. Put simply, we may *think better* where we are able to visualise.
2. Imaging forms a vital part of 'internal speech', through which we rehearse, and plan our daily lives. Internal speech is by its very nature faster and more fragmentary than external speech (according to Tomlinson and Avila it is 'fundamentally elliptical, vague, implicit, concrete, descriptive and narrative'), and it draws upon established neural pathways in such a way that little detail is required for complex images and ideas to be successfully evoked.
3. Mental imaging, then, is by its nature partial and incomplete (as compared with externalised acts of communication). It is in effect 'sufficient unto the day', adequate to the tasks we set ourselves. It is not a thing alone, but is grouped with, and interacts with speaking to ourselves, imperceptibly rehearsing bodily movements, and checking our emotional states.
4. But if partial and incomplete, there is good reason to suppose that those who use images more intensively tend to produce more 'complete' accounts than others. Giesen and Peeck (1984), for instance, found that visualisers would claim to know

¹³ Victor Nell (1988) offers an unusual combination of research into reading, and into the brain and mental states that this induces.

details not provided by the text ('John fell and trapped his arm' ... which arm was that?) – their visualisation allowed them to 'fill in' missing details.

5. In general, in fact, the more people deploy mental imaging, the more concrete and sure is their acquisition of and confidence with cognitive structures.

Problematising these research traditions

It is not hard to see in broad ways how these principles could be relevant to thinking about films and film audiences. However, there are a number of aspects which cannot be addressed from within this essentially skill-acquisition frame. There is an *inherent individualism* in this sort of work, which sees each person acquiring skills, and using mental imaging for this purpose, on her or his own, and is only interested individual differences. Kosslyn and Jolicoeur opened their 1980 review by stating their interest in 'the scientific study of individual differences', and this emphasis remains right up to their most recent (2006) work.¹⁴ The same is true in Esrock's account, where the whole point at issue is visualisation's contribution to assisting recall, learning and comprehension; and the question is whether these are differentially distributed, leading even perhaps to different 'cognitive styles' (1994: 125).

In a different fashion Tomlinson and Avila, although clearly they are interested in social relations of teaching and learning, in fact still privilege the private and personal aspect of a person's inner voice. For example they say: '... inner speech and outer speech are very different both in their grammar and in their roles. We use our inner voice far more than we do our outer voice, which we use to interact with others. Unlike our outer voice, which has to share many features with other voices in order for it to be understood, our inner voice is private, personal and unique. It is our own voice, which we can use and develop however we wish' (2007). It is this putative freedom and individuality which I wish to qualify. I am not dismissing the relevance to some topics of this emphasis, but it is strikingly limiting. It disables understanding the *mutual support, sharing and co-production* of images which we have seen in my opening quotations. People can see different media as generating different possibilities, demands and expectations of

¹⁴ There are other problems with Kosslyn's work which I note here, but are not quite so central to where I go in this essay. John Yuille (1985a and 1985b) has criticised a number of weaknesses in Kosslyn's work. Part of his critique turns on specific problems in his experimental practices. Partly, it is a critique of the *very idea* of dealing with issues of mental imaging experimentally. In his 1985b essay, Yuille mounts a powerful critique of the very notion of laboratory experimentation, using many examples to show how it is the very manipulation of the research context, and thereby of the subjects of the research, which produces what are then claimed to be 'findings'.

visualisation for them. This kind of individualistic research orientation will not be able to answer questions about possible conflicts between prompting sources. We've also seen the way in which, for many viewers, the *personal* aspect of visualisation gains in interest if it can be compared, even tested, against other people's visions. Again, an approach emphasising difference, separation and privileging the personal will not find it easy to address the *shared*, even *collective* aspects of visualisations. And because of this, it will not readily address the role of visualisation in people's *imaginative* lives.

Esrock's work, for all its value, reveals a further problem. It is not accidental that her emphasis is entirely on 'visualisation' for *literary* audiences, or 'the reader'. There is a powerful cultural preference in play which makes it easier to be interested in, and to argue a significant role for imaging in relation to *literature* than an already-visual medium such as film. Imaging can claim to be an enrichment of a word-based medium. When, for instance, Esrock notes that individuals who image strongly, tend to read more slowly, she can associate that with greater attention and concentration. But films set their own speed. Films are also already visual. Indeed, a great deal of film theory has treated them as first and foremost visual, with sound as a dependent second-string. Isn't there something otiose about saying that film viewers 'visualise'? Or if not, what distinction is implied between *seeing* a film and *visualising* its world? So, again, when Esrock reports the controversy between Roman Ingarden and Wolfgang Iser over whether readers need to 'concretise' that which is not explicitly stated ('the old man was largely bald' ... so, was the remainder of his hair grey?), it is not hard to see that this cannot readily apply to a film, since almost of necessity such additional visual information will have been supplied. It appears that 'visualisation' is being defined and understood in a way which precludes its relevance to film studies.

'Inner speech': a dialogical approach

I propose that we turn elsewhere. There is certainly nothing unusual in drawing attention to the work of the group of Russian theorists and researchers who, in the early years of the twentieth century, opened up new ways of thinking within philosophy, linguistics, literary theory, folklore and other fields. But their contribution to thinking about *inner speech* is much less-considered. In particular Valentin Volosinov, Mikhail Bakhtin and – perhaps even more than the other two, because he combined his theoretical considerations with close empirical testing – Lev Vygotsky formulated a way of conceiving the nature of

thought-processes which I believe can add whole new dimensions to our thinking about 'visualisation'.¹⁵ I will not attempt here to provide a full rationale or defence for their ideas. Rather, I hope to mark out their distinctiveness, and show the clear benefits they bring to our understanding of the phenomenon of 'visualisation', and the concrete materials emerging from our questionnaires and interviews.

Members of this school of thinkers all share a common starting point: that human consciousness is best conceived as a form of 'inner speech'. This is because for all of them the command of semiotic processes is a key mark of human beings. As a child masters language, so it transforms itself into a full social human being. But all of them add a second premise to this account: since all speech is inherently dialogical, so inner speech has to be understood as proto-social. It is a readying to speak, the preparation of orientations to the world, to other people's speech. In our heads, we address ourselves as if we were addressing 'others'. (For those who know it, there are resonances of this in the sociological work of G H Mead.)

I have tried to summarise their account of 'inner speech' in the following key points, particularly drawing upon Vygotsky's work:

1. 'Inner speech' is an *achievement*. A crucial part of the transition from childhood to adulthood is the emergence of the ability to consider in advance, to rehearse thoughts and responses, to go over things in our heads. This is achieved, first, by the encountering adult human semiotic materials on a regular basis. In the process of learning these, children go through a process of what Vygotsky calls 'genetic development'. By this he means that a new mode of social-mental operating emerges which has its own rules. Wertsch summarises this genetic principle as follows: 'once higher mental formations have emerged on the basis of certain dynamic preconditions, these formations themselves influence the processes that spawned them' (1985: 190). The implications of this are well captured in a sentence quoted by Wertsch: 'For the young child, to think means to recall; but for the adolescent, to recall means to think' (191).
2. In being an achievement, or an emergent property, human consciousness overwrites, as it were, the component parts from which it emerges. It transforms them into a new set of directions and capacities. And in doing so, what emerges is 'a unified whole, [in which] the separate functions are linked with each other in activity' (Rieber & Robinson, 2004: 33). The significance of this is great. It challenges notions such as brain-localisation. While of course different regions of the brain are *activated* in mental activities, they are not *distributable* to those regions. And while studies of

¹⁵ I owe much of my initial understanding of Vygotsky's approach to two excellent books (1985, and 1991) by James Wertsch. Wertsch has also (2003) translated and introduced a more formal statement of some of the key ideas involved here, by Anna Akhutina, one of Vygotsky's pupils.

local forms of brain damage can certainly assist in therapies, they cannot reductively explain the nature of the emergent phenomena. In related fashion, the automaticity with which mainstream psychology, for instance, has separated mental processes into cognitive, affective and behavioural aspects is also challenged.

3. It was crucial to Vygotsky's approach that the development of inner speech was inseparable from the development of, outer, social communicative competences. It is part of learning to be a competent participant in our society. This had several parts to it, which need noting and thinking separately. First, inner speech is *faster, more condensed* and *less formally organised* than any resultant communicative form. In an elegant phrase, Vygotsky draws attention to its 'unique abbreviated syntax' (cited Wertsch, 1985: 122). Thus far this conforms with the findings of Kossler and others.
4. But while thus far the fit is reasonable, Vygotsky along with his contemporaries has a quite distinctive answer as to *why* and *how* this happens; and a series of distinctive implications flow from this. Vygotsky posits a distinction between the 'sense' and the 'meaning' of words. By 'sense', he refers to 'the aggregate of all the psychological facts emerging in our consciousness because of the word'. It is with these that inner speech works, increasingly confidently as a child masters its language. 'Meaning' relates to how that flux of motivated feelings are held together by the shared repertoire of terms that make up a social vocabulary. Each word, in use, depends upon 'that fixed, unchanging point which remains stable during all the changes of sense in different contexts' (cited, Wertsch, 1985: 122).¹⁶ 'Sense', meanwhile, contextualises meaning, telling us how something *matters* in a particular context. Further, while it is evident that for Vygotsky inner speech involves words in sequences, there is nothing to say that the way in which associations flow in and around them should not simultaneously draw in all kinds of sensory experiences. This is important inasmuch as it undoes the need, which Kossler in particular has felt, to argue for the *separate* occurrence of imaging. In fact, it may well be that his experimental routines, which seek to *isolate* imaging processes, produce a separation that may be very unlikely. In day to day operations, words, images, sounds, memories are thoroughly imbricated.
5. At this point we need to introduce two further features mainly discussed by Bakhtin and Volosinov. Vygotsky does not directly address them, perhaps because they are least important and visible in relation to children's development, which was at the centre of his attention. Both relate to the ways in which inner speech may be understood as *historically-situated*. Wertsch, in his critical exegesis of Vygotsky's approach, himself imports one such feature from Bakhtin's work. He shows how Bakhtin emphasises the ways in which, within different literary traditions, different 'voices' are mixed, and mutually embroiled, but in varying ways in different literary traditions and different historical periods. These are, he argues, 'forms of dialogicality' – the available conventions and rules for how we speak and relate to each other – and they shift across time and place. They have histories, and we are all born and form ourselves within those histories. How we think to speak, therefore, how we know to rehearse public forms of address, is historically varied. Volosinov, too, argued along these lines – but with a slightly different intent. He argued that speech (spoken,

¹⁶ Volosinov developed the same distinction, but using different terms to describe it. He separated, and then related, 'that factor of unity' that is common to a word across the 'as many meanings as there are contexts of its usage' (p. 90). In fact this could mislead. Historically, of course, words do substantially shift in their 'stable' meanings. But at any point, to be useable in communication, there must be enough of a shared, stable centre. I explored this in Chapter 12 of my *Comics* (1989).

printed, or whatever) always comes pre-organised by 'speech genres', whether large or little. These are what we might call sedimented expectations of how communication will go on in kinds of settings. Pubs, shops, schools, television interviews, novels, theatres, cinemas: each of these is a distinct arena at a point in time and has communicative conventions and expectations which people learn to use. These are laid down over time, and they change, as historical circumstances shift. And it is by mastery of these that we become successful social actors. They are of course not hermetically sealed from each other. But inner speech rehearses communicative acts *in preparation for specific contexts of participation*, so they matter. Here, again, inner speech gains historicity.

These factors (achievement, compression, flux, motivation, and historicity) combine to make inner speech, for Vygotsky, and for his compatriots, the *point of creative response* in communication. And here something very curious happens, as is noted by Wertsch. In talking about how inner speech draws upon and plays with the flux of associations that constitute a word's 'sense', Vygotsky 'does a Bakhtin' – he uses a *literary* example. He cites Gogol's title *Dead Souls* as an example of an expression which assembles wider and wider circles of associations, into a constellation of suggestive meanings. The many possible meanings of 'dead souls', from the literal to the metaphoric to the symbolic, are what mark it as a work of art (see Rieber & Robinson, 2004: 102). Vygotsky then writes: 'We observe something analogous – in inner speech. In inner speech the word, as it were, absorbs the sense of preceding and subsequent words, thereby extending almost without limit the boundaries of its making' (cited Wertsch, 1985: 127). Again, in explicating the role of intonation, Vygotsky cites Dostoyevsky's famous short story of the five workmen who conduct an entire conversation using one swear-word to each other. His point is that their belonging to a common community enables them to 'read' each others' motives and intonations – their several specific transformations from inner to outer speech – and thus 'say' far more than they say. But again, it is a literary example.

The possible implications of this are very striking to me. If imaginative artistic expression offers the best model for scholars to conceive how inner speech works, perhaps we might go further and say that it also actually provides *much of the models whereby human minds manage the transformation of inner into outer speech*. Let me try to explain what I am saying here. In Vygotsky's account, one of the *least* important factors of 'inner speech' is that it is inner. He strongly rejects and refutes any notion that inner speech is outer speech that has learnt to be silent. On the contrary, he takes from Piaget the notion of

children's egocentric speech – when young children talk busily to and about themselves without any other respondent – but transforms his account by arguing that this is an early and incomplete form of inner speech. He even suggests that babies burbling without words may be rehearsing what will become inner speech. But if its 'inner-ness' is not the crucial mark, what is? It is inner speech's prolixity and excessiveness, its creativity, and its capacity to detach itself from the requirements of action that distinguish it. And Vygotsky is insistent that the transition from inner to outer speech, from thinking to speaking, is not simply putting noises to already conceived words – it is a process of *transformation* from one form into another. Would it not make sense, then, to see artistic expressions, and also our responses to artistic expressions, as ways in which our sense of *being* and *having* consciousness are brought into view? If inner speech is excessive in content, and requires selection and condensation to become utterances, then may not 'art' be that which embodies the *rules of transformation* from inner to outer speech? If so, it makes perfect sense that Vygotsky will turn for his means to express the relations between inner and outer speech to artistic examples. For this is what they are.

The achievement of 'visualisations', on this model, may mark a most distinctive achievement, a point at which humans rise to and achieve a new level of social-semiotic insight and participation. If we can learn how to research such achievements empirically, in a way that conserves and addresses the understandings offered by this dialogic approach, we have potentially a model for thinking about what audiences achieve through their orientations to books, films, and the like.

This throws light on a puzzle I have with one aspect of Vygotsky's work. Vygotsky insisted that inner speech is always *motivated*. That is, inner speech is always connected to interests, desires and impulses. As put, this is not, to be honest, a particularly insightful addition. My suspicion is that it was driven by the need to demarcate this whole approach from the emergent behaviourism of psychologists such as Pavlov (in Russia) and Watson (in the USA), who reduced human communicativeness to 'responses' in the stimulus/response model.¹⁷ But a bare insistence on the omnipresence of *desire* and *interest* in relation to inner speech has the same force as the more recent insistence that audiences are 'active', in the latter case as a counter to the model of audience 'passivity' embedded in American

¹⁷ This 'reading' of Vygotsky is supported by the remarks he makes on the concept of 'consciousness', which he seeks to rescue from 'reductionist psychologies'. He particularly opposed the separation of the intellectual side of consciousness from 'all the fullness of real life, from the living motives, interests, and attractions of the thinking human' (cited Wertsch, 1985: 189).

mass communications research. But in the same way that 'the active audience' turns out to be a rhetorical figure, so does the 'desiring' inner speaker. To become useful, we have to be able to distinguish and grade levels and kinds of desire. And this allows us to consider one expansion of the work of these thinkers, but in accord with their basic premises. Vygotsky, as we have seen, saw human thought as obeying a 'genetic principle', that is, its achievement constitutes an emergent process whereby the rules of operation change because of the new capacities achieved. Consider the possibility that 'visualisations', with their will to completeness, constitute such an emergent process. The more completed a person's visualisation, with all the attendant sense of wholeness, commitment, and sense of belonging, the more the principles of this visualisation become the basis of a person's engagement with the story-world, the principle of evaluation, and of attached significance. We would think differently towards a film, and make use of it differently, in light of having achieved such a visualisation. Putting it in a more vernacular say, we would have a point of view, a position from which we conduct our encounter with the film.¹⁸ At this point, the *self-consciousness* of the process would become of critical importance.

¹⁸ In the course of directing the *Lord of the Rings* project, and in particular as I have worked at the analysis and understanding of the materials it generated, I have been led to investigate any fields and traditions of thought rarely visited by film scholars. In the course of trying to make sense of viewers' passionate involvements with Tolkien's work, I was led into exploring a whole tradition of work in consumer research, addressing 'passionate consumption'. The most recent exposition of this has come through the work of Russell Belk and his colleagues. But here, I want to say something about the *origins* of this work, which are relevant at this point. In the 1960s, just at the same time as public opinion and market researchers were rather desperately trying to understand and deal with 'alienation' among its publics, one key figure introduced a distinction which might help, and explain the circumstances under which consumers would 'drop their guard'. Herbert Krugman, vice-president of the opinion-polling organisation Marplan, introduced what he called 'involvement theory' in his 1965 Presidential Address to the American Association of Public Opinion Research. Krugman was interested in the fugitive nature of advertising's influence. Just to be memorable they needed both repetition and recency. He proposed that the missing factor was 'involvement', the salience that an advertisement has for its audience. To get this, advertisers will need to 'play along with' an audience (in a disturbing analogy, he cites Hitler's use of anti-semitism as an example of successfully used salience). His argument is that both commercial and academic research on persuasion has become blinded to 'two entirely different ways of experiencing and being influenced by mass media' (355): one characterised by lack of personal involvement, the other by high degrees of involvement. But what does 'involvement' mean here? In a subsequent (1966) essay Krugman sought to operationalise it as 'the number of "connections" that the subject makes between the content of the persuasive stimulus and the content of his own life' (584). This of course makes the relationship still *cumulative*, rather than seeing involvement as potentially *transformative*, because of the tendency to an integrated, coherent relationship. From a persuasion perspective, that would be no help. What Krugman wanted, was the dropping of guards.

Talking of 'visualisation' in *The Lord of the Rings* (2)

I want now to return to our *Lord of the Rings* responses, to ask what we might gain from applying this model. What elements and components become visible in those 300+ responses, and what further sense can we gain from them, now? I will not claim on this occasion to have used a clearly delineated method for coding and analysis, since this is an exploratory study, not attempting to be definitive. I focus here on seven strands, and illustrate these, for reasons of space, with just a few examples:

1. The term 'visualisation' is used almost entirely by those who are strongly enthusiastic about Tolkien's story-world. In fact, for most, they are also enthusiastic about the film. The film has passed tests of adequacy. That does not stop people occasionally noting slips, gaps or discrepancies. But these are noted as *exceptions*. The reason for this is that the term 'visualisation' does not refer to an additive achievement – getting a majority of things right, as it were. Rather, it evokes and conveys a sense of an *achieved whole*. A visualisation is almost automatically a good thing because it is an achievement, a gestalt of meanings and emotions, rather than just a pictorial enactment (although of course pictorial success is logically part of the 'whole'). This is suggested also by the frequent use of organic, totalising terms to fill out 'visualisation': it is 'complete', 'perfect', a 'vision', 'my imagination come to life'. The result, indeed, is an *intensified life* in the story – a strengthening of both meanings and emotions, a stronger and richer connection with narrative, actions, characters and thematic purposes. (A striking example: 'Breathtaking convincing visualisation of scenes from the book. Grandiose, captures the mythical dimension, human quest versus universal forces'.)
2. People have no difficulty at all thinking of a film contributing to a 'visualisation'. There is, in other words, an ontological distinction between the visual aspect of a film, and a resultant 'visualisation'. The latter will of course have visual image components, but it will also embrace other senses along with understanding of characters and motivations, and a sense of the rules and laws that govern behaviours in this 'world'. There is, in other words, a tendency to *transcend medium*. People tend to talk of the 'world' of the film, as both object and goal.
3. But if the film has to pass tests of adequacy, so too do respondents' own imaginings. And a second strong theme among my responses is a theme of *gratitude*. There are several strands to this. It is gratitude at receiving the contribution of other people's expertise – their knowledge of costumes, settings, battle plans. ('It helped me flesh out the action-oriented sequences that I cannot easily visualise because I don't know much about medieval-style fighting'.) It is their ability to embody something so large that it has defeated some individuals: the scale of Minas Tirith, or the battle of Pelennor Fields, or of the destruction of the Ring. ('The battle scenes – it is always hard for me to visualise stuff like that because there is so much going on in them, but the films really made it clear to me what was happening'.) It is gratitude also at having someone 'fill in' bits that for any reason either passed proper notice (as they can now see) or were just difficult (several mention the Army of the Dead). ('I wanted to finish the visualisation of Tolkien's world'.) The wider repertoire available to the film-makers

enables them to imagine things that individuals can't always manage. And with gratitude goes, often, acknowledgement of the risks that they took, and the courage required of them.

4. These lead to the most common response of all, one that embraces so many people (and they know it, which is also important). It is the *sheer pleasure* of seeing an external embodiment of one's previously private imagining. What people appear to gain from this is a *confirmation* not only that they were on the right lines, but also that it is thus a *shared, public* property. ('The visualisation of someone else's vision of MY Middle-earth and the peoples who inhabit it' – note the emphatic claim to possession even as the comparison is made.) One answer, by perversely saying the opposite, reveals this tendency most strongly: 'I feel just a tinge of sadness that millions of people will share a vision of Middle-earth that I had thought was personal to me for so long. It was as if someone had got inside my head and broadcast my dreams and visualisations'. What is important is the intersection of a public with a personal history: 'To see places I had visualised since I was a boy'; 'I've loved the books for ages and ages and wanted to see them visualised'; but also 'I hope the films would visualise the books for me'.)
5. This sense of a shared imagining – that 'someone else' has conceived this whole world in the same way – has itself several versions. In some cases, it is as a *comparison* – I saw it like this, they did too, that's amazing! ('Seeing how someone else visualises the books has just been a great kick!!'; 'I wanted to know how others had visualised the places from the book and if they were similar to how I had imagined them ...'; 'I wanted to see how my interpretation stacked up to someone else's'). It's sometimes a sense of *increased value* as a result – this confirms what I have always thought and felt! Elsewhere it is a sense of *communicated vision*. Sometimes specific groups and locations are suggested, in for instance answers that talk about 'fans' and the 'masses'. At other times it is stated more openly as in this answer: 'The strongest point is that it almost perfectly visualised my own fantasies about Middle Earth ever since I read the books for the first time 33 years ago. All characters and sets are just as I imagined, even better. Remarkable is that this is the opinion of many people who read the book all over the world'.
6. A feature of 'visualisations' which could almost pass unnoticed, because it might seem obvious, is their *self-consciousness*. People who achieve significant degrees of visualisation are very aware of doing it, want to do it, turn them over in their minds, and reflect on the nature of their own achievements. Actually, this to me is an important distinguishing feature in its own right. It indicates that these are *higher order mental constructs*, and they may only arise when there is exceptional motivation and commitment. And with this goes what I would see as a very particular enactment of Vygotsky's principle of motivation. People are effectively declaring a *commitment* to this world. In the act of visualising, people attach import and significance to the story-world.
7. Finally, and almost as an outcome of whatever people take from all the above, comes a stronger sense of belonging and ownership. This story is more mine because I now see how it can also belong to others. 'I'm not sure you will understand because I myself don't truly understand it. I am a grandmother of 52 years old and I never reacted to any movie like I have to these films. I think it's because of my love for the books since I was a teenager, but it's also that Mr Jackson's vision is so close to how I visualised the characters, places & story that I feel he saw into my heart and created the movies just

for me'. The intensity of sense of communication, the rightness (cohesion, and completeness) of the 'vision' makes it possible to become simultaneously more personal and more shared. ('I have been a fan of Tolkien since I was very young and being able finally to visualise this amazing story has been such a joy for me and to be able to turn my son onto this as well has been equally great. I am so thankful to Peter Jackson taking on this great undertaking. He made such an incredible set of films, I don't think they can ever be touched'.)

A number of aspects of 'visualisation', I would argue, have become visible and thence meaningful as a result of approaching them through the lens of dialogic theory. We can see, above all, the visualisations are *important* to their holders; they are simultaneously personal and social; and they relate strongly to people's sense of self. There are of course those who want to stress the *privacy* of their vision: 'It was a personal thing. To see the conclusion of a three year epic and how it matched to personal ideas and visualisations from reading the book was purely personal'. But why bother checking the 'match' if it is so strictly and entirely personal? Even here, it seems that the *value* of one's personal imagining can be intensified by comparison, measuring, evaluating alternatives. But for most, it is not a specific group that this amounts to. Rather, it is participating in being a *richly imagining human being*. The fact that *The Lord of the Rings* offers people a *complete world* – an entire place with its own history and geography – tends to lift it above the local or parochial. Or, perhaps better, the local and parochial can find a place in this world.¹⁹ There is, I would contend, a component of unconstrained celebration of simple imaginativeness. When people turn to each other, or to us, or indeed to their internal addressee and say, involuntarily and unqualifiedly, 'Wow!', there is an element of an almost Kantian aesthetic ideal, a moment of pure imaginative contemplation. It is one of the few contexts in which we get such an opportunity. It may be idealised, and secured by its distance from everyday political realities, but the sense of participation in a 'global conversation', and visualising a world where good can win over evil, is nonetheless surely

¹⁹ In a separate investigation, two of us studied the part played by images of 'New Zealand' in people's imagining of Middle-earth. There were several surprising elements. First, New Zealand became a fantasy geography in that it became large enough in people's imaginations to contain a *whole continent and more*. However, there were two things it did *not* contain. First, 'evil' was an importation. Middle-earth functioned as an inherently *good* place. Third, and most strangely, there was one part of Tolkien's geography which did not appear for many to be in 'New Zealand'. That was the Shire. This part remained 'local' to many viewers – that is, they found geographical analogies close to themselves and their own experience and wider sense of place, yet still somehow in touch, imaginatively, with the wider world of Middle-earth/New Zealand. See Martin Barker & Ernest Mathijs, forthcoming 2007.

valuable. It is, I would argue, a form of *communication become communion*. That makes it neither a good thing nor a bad thing, in itself. But it certainly makes it worth attending to.

Wider implications

What follows from all this? I suspect there are more, important implications that I am not yet ready to elaborate, but I would at least point to the following:

(1) As an audience researcher, I am fascinated by the potentialities for penetrating audience understandings which 'visualisation' might offer. 'Visualisations' are not automatic productions, they are more-or-less achievements. But if Vygotsky in particular is right, they have all the look of 'genetic' developments – that is, human mental productions which have a tendency to *seek completion*. People *want* their visualisations to be coherent and complete. Thus, they enter self-consciousness. The stronger the motivation, the greater the tendency to completion. Something follows from this: epistemologically, not all members of an audience are of equal value. Putting it crudely, we can learn much more from some than from others. I propose four linked stages. Suppose we could (a) find ways to locate, bring into view and then penetrate the most elaborated visualisations of a film (or any other cultural form, come to that); (b) locate the components which typify it, when present in incomplete, unelaborated forms; (c) thereby identify the *kinds of audience* who share in this visualisation, in both elaborated and partial forms: then (d) we would surely be able to identify the nature and shape of distinct interpretive communities. We would be able to see its tendencies and trajectory, and what it would be like if 'lived completely'.²⁰ We might even begin to identify the kinds of community which foster the more complete elaboration of such visualisations. But it would not be the 'average' response that will reveal this. It would be the exceptional, elaborated, complete versions that would tell us most. This has complicated methodological consequences which I have attempted to tackle elsewhere.²¹

²⁰ I find myself once again drawn back to the ideas of Lucien Goldmann, who many years ago, in particular in his book *The Hidden God* (1964), formulated the idea of studying the potentials of a 'world-vision', and how these are actualised in its adherents.

²¹ Barker, forthcoming. Currently available from the author in Mss form.

(2) Not everyone appears equally to form 'visualisations'. But it is not clear why this is so. Is it because there are just individual differences between people, in this respect – some are strong visualisers, others less so? Can visualisation be taught, encouraged, increased? In the fields of language learning, we have seen it used as a 'local tool' to some effect. But the kinds of spontaneous visualisation associated with attaching importance to story-worlds might be different. Or might it be that particular kinds of discursive community better sustain and encourage visualisations, as part of their interpretive response strategies? We don't know. But it is worthwhile conceiving ways in which we might find out.

(3) What happens when a story-world transcends the medium in which it was first postulated? This is the field of adaptation theory and analysis. There are of course those who will 'read' a story strictly in terms of the rules and conventions of the founding medium. Be it Batman and comic books, Jane Austen and the novel, *Star Trek* as TV series, or Shakespeare as play-text²², it is possible to receive and respond to these only in terms of their place within, and contribution to, that medium. Equally, it is possible to generate a *transcending* account of a story, lifting its depicted world above its originating medium, and giving it a wider significance. Then, it can gain the capacity to be seen as a contribution to the whole of a human culture. A study of visualisations which began to unpick and separate these aspects could transform how and why we attend to issues of adaptation.

(4) Finally, I am intrigued by the (to me, entirely unexpected) possibilities opened up by thinking directly about the relations between inner speech and artistic form. Art in whatever form or genre involves compression and intensification, a multiplication of sense through form, and a combination of rule-following and novelty. It involves an amplification of motive and affect. In invoking one sense, it activates others. And it *achieves* a unity whilst holding in train all the multiplicity of meanings. These are exactly the qualities which Vygotsky and others attributed to inner speech – but externalised as formed and communicable unities. Art thus appears to speak with the 'very voice' of inner speech – but publicly, communally.

²² There is an interesting ambiguity in here, of course. The academic study of Shakespeare has long belonged primarily to *literature* departments, in which the plays are studied as *texts* off the page, rather than as *performances* on stage. Similarly, the shuttling of certain books in and out of the 'canon of literature' displays the same status-operation at work.

Closing comment

The thinking and writing of this essay was a journey exactly as laid out here. I began with the puzzle of those interview quotations, not knowing how best to think about them. In seeking answers to that puzzle, I visited serially all the places I touch on in the essay, and have ended in an entirely unexpected place.

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