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### Ljubica MATEK

Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences  
University of Osijek  
Lorenza Jägera 9, HR – 31 000 Osijek, Croatia  
lmatek@ffos.hr

UDK 821.111-32.09 Ballard, J.G.=111  
791=111

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### Jelena PATAKI

Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences  
University of Osijek  
Lorenza Jägera 9, HR – 31 000 Osijek, Croatia  
jelena.pataki@gmail.com

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## FROM “CRASH!” TO *CRASH*: ADAPTING THE ADAPTATION

### Abstract

The paper focuses on J.G. Ballard’s various adaptations of his own material related to the issue of the sexual and sensual nature of an automobile crash, and suggests that adaptation is one of the key methods in art and literature which can be used as a means of contemplating and developing various aesthetic and political ideas. Ballard’s short story “Crash!” was first published in the ICA’s (Institute of Contemporary Arts) *Eventsheet* in February 1969, and later became a chapter of his experimental novel *The Atrocity Exhibition* (1970). At the same time, Ballard adapts the idea into the “Crashed Cars” exhibition (1970) in London. The short story was then adapted into a short film, *Crash!*, directed by Harley Cokeliss (1971) and starring Ballard himself, to be finally adapted into the novel *Crash* (1973). Ballard’s adaptation of his initial ideas across literary forms and media testifies to the importance of adaptation as a process and method of creating art. Thus, rather than suggesting that adaptations merely “breathe life” into the written word, the paper points to the conclusion that the form and content are mutually influential and that, in this case, the novel itself is an adaptation, rather than a hypotext (which it becomes in 1996 to David Cronenberg as he adapts it to film). The complexity of the relationship between the source text and its many adaptations has already contributed to the deconstruction, in Derrida’s terms, of the hierarchy (opposition) between the original

and the copy. Rather, Ballard's crossmedial and transmedial adaptations of his own ideas show how, as Ray would suggest, an adaptation cites the source and grafts it into a new context, giving it a new function, both aesthetic and political.

**Keywords:** "Crash!," *Crash*, J.G. Ballard, Harley Cokeliss, David Cronenberg, adaptation, hypertext, deconstruction, crossmedial, transmedial

## **Introduction: *Intertextuality* and *Addressivity***

The combined literary, filmic, and artistic creation of J.G. Ballard's short story "Crash!" (1969),<sup>1</sup> which went on to become a chapter in his experimental novel *The Atrocity Exhibition* (1970), and its subsequent adaptations as an art exhibition in London (1970), a short film *Crash!* directed by Harley Cokeliss (1971), the novel *Crash* (1973) written again by Ballard, and, finally, David Cronenberg's film version of the same title (1996) can be used as an example to analyse two interesting viewpoints in relation to cross-media adaptations. On the one hand, this is a theoretical approach based on the concept of *radical intertextuality*, as presented discernibly by Barthes, in that "The cultural codes [deployed by any single story] . . . will emigrate to other texts; there is no lack of hosts" (qtd. in Ray 122). On the other hand, through the alternative shift of the hypo- and hypertext status ascribed to the above mentioned works, one can follow the path of adaptation studies' historical development on the example of manifold re-functioning of one literary and two film adaptations generated by Ballard's primary text – the short story entitled "Crash!"

To start with, it might be useful to go back and consider the notion of radical intertextuality. In his discussion on the concept of genre – wherein he is not interested in genres in terms of adherence to conventionality of specific works, but in the genre as a universal dimension of textuality<sup>2</sup> – John Frow purports the idea that language as a form of human creation, and thus every text (both written and spoken), is "never singular and never a moment of pure origin" (49). Consequently, nothing that humans do or make can be created *ex nihilo*; everything must necessarily have some sort of predecessor and influence.

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<sup>1</sup> The story was first published in *Eventsheet*, the magazine of The Institute of Contemporary Arts in London, in February 1969.

Such a way of deconstructing, or rather of rewriting the definition of originality, testifies of countless interrelationships that are always at play between each and every artistic creation. What is even more important, such an approach points to the need to observe and decipher these ever-present parallels and cross-sections in order to (better) understand both the primary work<sup>3</sup> and its adaptations, since “every text is an intertext whose stability and integrity are social and political rather than ontological” (Leitch 88). By extending his argument dealing with intertextuality in the following way, Frow also emphasizes the importance of interrelationships between various forms of texts (in the broadest sense of the word) with regard to the meaning of those texts:

Part of what the complex aesthetic genres imitate, then, is other genres and the effects they produce. In doing so they displace the genres they cite from their primary manner of producing these effects and turn them into a thematic object. . . . A more general word . . . for this phenomenon of speech (or writing, or images) which refers to other speech (or writing, or images . . .) is **intertextuality**. What I mean by this is the range of processes by which a text invokes another, but also the way texts are constituted as such by their relationship with other texts. No text is unique; we could not recognize it if it were. . . . All texts are shaped by the repetition and the transformation of other textual structures. (48)

Thus, this argument purports the idea that the connections between different (artistic) creations in fact constitute the very meaning of these works, and serves to show that it is only upon discovering these versatile connections that one can hope to come closer to their meaning.

In this sense, adaptation as a process necessarily relies on and also confirms deconstructionist ideas about multiple meanings and the importance of the reader’s approach to text. In her book, *Analyzing Literature-to-Film Adaptations: A Novelist’s Exploration and Guide*, Mary H. Snyder rightfully identifies Barthes’s essay “Death of the Author” as crucial in viewing adaptations (51, 52, 231) as Barthes moves the focus from the author of the text to its reader, which

<sup>3</sup> By following Linda Hutcheon’s definition of an adaptation as “a derivation that is not derivative – a work that is second without being secondary” (qtd. in Leitch 95), it is important to emphasize that the “primary work” is considered in this paper as superior to other texts only in the chronological sense, since it is known that adaptations can reshape the meaning of the *original* text, and not just the other way around.

opens up the text to multiple meanings, interpretations, and, subsequently, adaptations. Barthes suggests that "in ethnographic societies the responsibility for a narrative is never assumed by a person but by a mediator, shaman or relator" (142), making it clear that the text's "performance" (142) – or, in this context, its adaptation – is in fact superior to its source. Barthes will continue this line of thought in "From Work to Text," where he suggests that "*the Text is experienced only in an activity of production*. It follows that the Text cannot stop (for example, on a library shelf); its constitutive movement is that of cutting across (in particular, it can cut across the work, several works)" (157, italics in original). The essay presents a continuation of Barthes's theoretical endeavor to "relocate the 'work' of an author as instead a 'text,' opening up the text to textual relations, rather than limiting the work to that of one person as if they own that work and . . . defin[e] its identity. The concept of the 'text' allows the writing once again to stand alone, and in relationship with other texts" (Snyder 51).

Despite the use of the term "text," it is clear that Barthes's argument can be applied to all forms of artistic expression, including film. The initial short story and its four subsequent adaptations explored in this paper likewise highlight the idea of the importance of the reader rather than author since they constitute works of art created by three different people: Ballard's short story, novel, and exhibition, Cokeliss' short film, and Cronenberg's full-length motion picture. The adaptations serve, in fact, as attempts to read and reread the source text by means of different media and thus make meaning(s) from its complex theme.

Now, albeit never outright stated, all this implies the influence of a primary text – in the chronological sense – on the ones that are produced after it. In fact, adaptation should be viewed as "the gradual development of a 'meta-text'" (Cardwell 25), meaning that various adaptations of the same work might be influenced by each other, as well as by the original text. In his discussions of genre, John Frow refers to Bakhtin's theory of the dialogic orientation of language and addressivity (42–45), pointing to the importance of a kind of *exchange* (dialogue) in the formation or definition of genre. Specifically, *addressivity* is seen as "[a]n essential (constitutive) marker of the utterance . . . its quality of being directed to someone" (Bakhtin 95). The idea that every "utterance is constructed, as it were, in anticipation of encountering this response" (94) seems important in discussing adaptation, as it essentially follows that all creations are affected not only by that which comes prior to them but also by that which comes after them. What is more, every source text also requires a response whether in the

form of criticism, intertextuality (which already may be available in the source text itself), or adaptation. It follows that, just as the chronological precedent makes it possible for an infinite number of adaptations to come to life, so does each of these later creations influence and transform the meaning of the original work. In other words, any type of human expression is at all times inevitably permeated with already existent meanings, albeit re-functioned for the purpose of a new context. Hence, since the very act of creation always presents a sort of re-creation, one could say that adaptation is deeply rooted in intertextuality, making it the key process of all creative processes.

### 1. Narrativity in the Adaptations of Ballard’s “Crash!”

In accordance with Robert B. Ray’s argument, it is both against advice and inadequate for adaptation studies to exercise strict focus on the individual cases of filmic rewriting, as it was the case in the beginning of the field. Instead, it is strongly suggested that we try and establish a methodology that would strive to bring light to the whole notion of adaptation studies (121). Nevertheless, the specific case of Ballard’s short story and its subsequent rewritings in the form of two films and a novel serve a purpose of effectively combining the individual adaptation process (*individual* meaning that all three adaptations in a way spring from the initial short story, not referring to any of them in particular) and the quality of narrativity on which the process of adapting written texts to films is based as a whole. Narrativity is a complex and contested term used to express that a text (in the broadest possible sense) can be said to have a narrative strand, or “tellability,” “narrativehood” (Abbot), which can then be responded to, or adapted.

By default, film criticism has been reduced to the juxtaposing between film adaptations and literary works, more specifically the novels, but it has not put much effort into comparing films with other forms of art such as music or painting, or even less so, poetry. The reason for this, according to Ray, is precisely the *narrativity*: the joint characteristic of both novels and films (whether they are adapted from a certain source or not) as well as “a means of organizing information . . . not specific to any one medium” (121).<sup>4</sup> Indeed, the initial short

<sup>4</sup> Seymour Chatman defines narrativity in a similar way, considering it as “a deep structure quite independent of its medium. . . . [N]arrative is basically a kind of text organization, and that organization, that schema, needs to be actualized: in written words, as in stories and novels; in spoken words combined with the movements of actors imitating characters against sets which

story that went on to become a chapter in Ballard's *The Atrocity Exhibition*, an avant-garde series of short writings which the author himself called "condensed novels": provocative and often surreal compilation of social observations, disconnected narratives and political commentaries" (Mazurek 2), does feature characters and snippets of plot. However, the work is so *condensed* in both form and content that it resembles a kind of musing rather than an actual plot or narrative structure. Yet, however condensed, the idea of a car crash is such a potent narrative motif that even Ballard's static adaptation of a crash in the form of an art exhibition consisting of silent, immobile, mangled cars seems to have a narrativity of sort; namely, the piece is so suggestive that the audience cannot help but create stories in their mind – of how the accident came to be, of its consequences, and possibly even of how the audience would react to seeing or participating, or having someone they love participate in such a car crash. Unsurprisingly, it can be claimed that it is exactly those rare elements of true narrativity that have influenced the creation of Harley Cokeliss' short film (see fig. 1), which has retained the condensed nature of its hypotext, but has at the same time expanded its sparse narrativity into a more pronounced plot structure.

Cokeliss' rather abstract short film – not the conventional storytelling/narrative – was thus the logical way that Ballard's original chapter could have been adapted, since "the film, in which the decisive element is always the visual, cannot be content with . . . merely internal – and hence non-visible – events. The film requires an external, visible, 'shootable' picture for every internal happening" (Balasz 222). This brings us to the link between Cokeliss' and the (conditionally speaking) final adaptation of Ballard's short story that is Cronenberg's feature film. Cokeliss' short film's pronounced narrativity most probably played a role in Ballard's subsequent elaboration of the topic in the form of a full-fledged novel with complex characters and *visible* plot. In turn, it is most definite that, were it not for the elaborate storytelling, which can be observed in Ballard's novel, the creation of Cronenberg's film version would be prevented. The reason for such a claim is that, if we return to the concept of narrativity, the beginning of film industry (and with it of adaptation studies) is said to deliberately coincide with the rise of narratives, that is, the novels (Ray 125).

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imitate places, as in plays and films; in drawings; in comic strips; in dance movements, as in narrative ballet and in mime; and even in music" (121–22).



**Fig. 1.** Still from Cokeliss' short film *Crash!*; "Crash! Full-Tilt Autogeddon"; Ballardian.com, 10 Aug. 2007, <http://www.ballardian.com/crash-and-the-aesthetics-of-disappearance>.

When considering the argument that narrativity is a characteristic strongly present in "popular," but not as much in "high-art" works (Ray 121), it is possible to take note of a specific *issue* with the later two *Crashes* – Ballard's novel and Cronenberg's film – despite their stronger emphasis on narrativity when compared to the short story and short film preceding them. It concerns the issue of specific, recognizable, and frequently reiterated codes which serve as a prerequisite for the possibility of understanding of any language, thus also the language of art. Namely, as Barthes claims: "intelligibility requires signifiers whose connotations are predictable within a culture . . . [wherein] the sum of these stock connotations equals a culture's ideology" (qtd. in Ray 123). The severe redefinition of cultural codes of violence – usually connected to car crashes and that of sexuality, and their unprecedented merging, or, as Mazurek



puts it, the "marriage of automobility and desire" (2) – possibly constitute the reason why both Ballard's "techno-sex novel" and Cronenberg's "controversial distillation" (Cambor) based on it have encountered resistance when presented in the context of mainstream art. A testimony in the case of the novel *Crash* is an unsettled reaction of a reader from Ballard's publishing house, wherein they said: "This author is beyond psychiatric help. Do Not Publish!" (Sternberg 97). In a similar manner, Cronenberg's filmic transposition of Ballard's "nightmare marriage between sex and technology" (Ballard 4) with its explicit and bizarre sex scenes following car crashes was frowned upon so much that viewers chose to leave the cinema during the show. In support of this claim, Cambor notes that the reason for this is the

. . . double challenge [in *Crash*] . . . issued in several directions at once – to the dominant ideology behind filmmaking, to the subject position of the spectator and to the symbolic order itself in which "public morals" are encoded. . . . For *Crash*, though it does not invent a "new language of desire," clearly aims to produce a drastic uncertainty in the old one which translates into a destabilization of the ego as conditioned by the traditional narrative fiction film.

## 2. Transmedial and Crossmedial Adaptation as the Key Creative Process

Adapting across various media forms and distributing adaptation via various media channels is an everyday matter in today's world of digital storytelling. Ballard readily accepted the fact that technology is becoming an important part of human life as it shapes our relationships, and he devoted most of his creative life to exploring this topic by adapting it to various media forms: text, art exhibition, and film. Depending on one's interpretation of Ballard's (and others') treatment of the basic story, and whether each adaptation is seen as either the same story or a different story belonging to the same storyworld, the adaptations may be seen as *transmedial*, that is, belonging to the same storyworld, which contains many stories rendered in many forms and distributed through many channels, or *crossmedial*, that is, one story distributed via different channels to reach a broader audience (Moloney). Often, it is difficult to distinguish between the two, and Moloney acknowledges that "[m]ultimedia, crossmedia and transmedia are points on a fluid spectrum that blend from one to the next," and whether adaptations of "Crash!" are seen as one or multiple stories, they certainly have



enabled Ballard (and other adaptors) and an ever broader audience to look at the human-car relationship from different perspectives.

The process of transmedial/crossmedial adaptation of Ballard's "Crash!" illustrates the claim that adaptation is one of the key methods in art and literature that is used as a means of contemplating and developing various aesthetic and political ideas. Ballard's literary interests are both complex and controversial, and they are typically situated at the crossroads between the literary, the aesthetic, the psychological, and the social, like the haunting theme of "the sexuality of the car accident" (Baxter 190).

In a footnote to "Crash!," published as a chapter of *The Atrocity Exhibition*, Ballard explains the fascinating relationship between human and car, a subject and an object that converge in a car crash:

Aside from the fact that we generally own or are at the controls of the crashing vehicle, the car crash differs from other disasters in that it involves the most powerfully advertised commercial product of this century, an iconic entity that combines the elements of speed, power, dream and freedom within a highly stylised format that defuses any fears we may have of the inherent dangers of these violent and unstable machines. (Ballard, *The Atrocity Exhibition* 76)

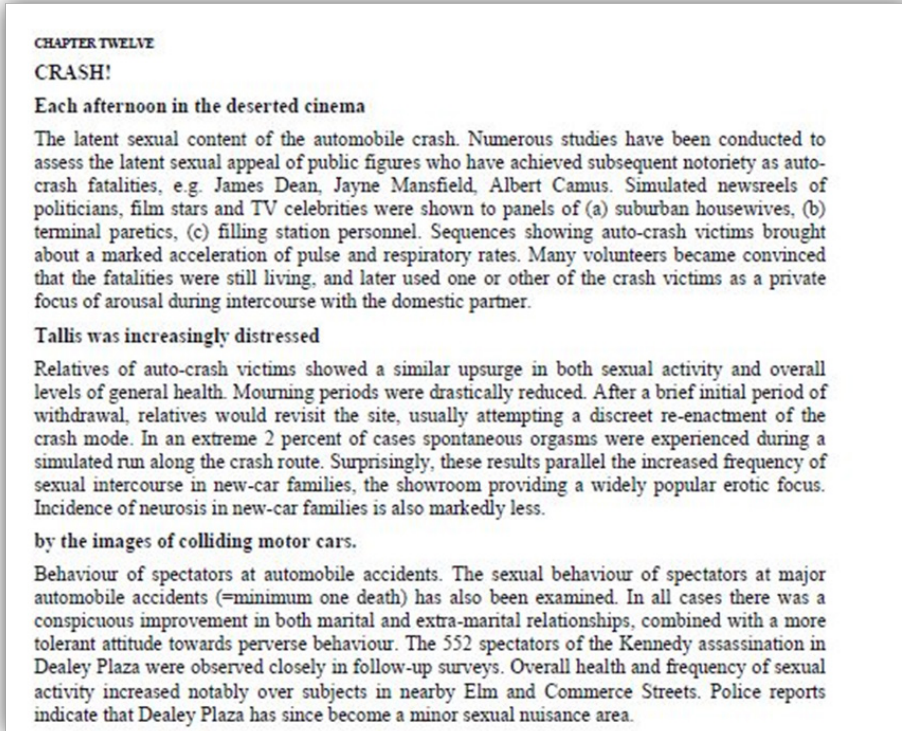
The desire for luxury items that are being intensely marketed and publicized, on the one hand, and violence and death, on the other, converge as Eros and Thanatos in the phenomenon of a car and the dynamics between the two becomes the focus of Ballard's interest as he develops the topic by means of subsequent transmedial/crossmedial adaptations.

The obsession with a car crash and all its physiological, psychological, and material implications began even prior to the publication of the short story "Crash!." According to Simon Ford, "In May 1968 Ballard was planning, along with Paolozzi and the psychologist Dr Christopher Evans, to produce a play at the Institute of Contemporary Arts (ICA) entitled *Crash*, featuring a crashed car." The idea was to illustrate how a car crash liberates the sexual libido as the victim dies "in an intensity impossible in any other form" (Rose 17), but the project was never realized. Nevertheless, Ballard continued to pursue his idea "about the cultural meaning of car crashes" by means of "many projects, collaborations and adaptations," which showed that he wanted "to operate in the wider

cultural field" (Ford) and not just in literature. Clearly, Ballard understood that the richness and complexity of the motif cannot be adequately addressed within one single work of art, and that a single work of art cannot reach an audience as wide as can several different works created in different media. It can be argued that Ballard's lifelong interest in topics that require some kind of a universal catharsis and his depiction of "protagonists [who] are often engaged in a desperate search for meaning following some catastrophic event, and who have to adapt to a harsh new environment" (Hall) are a consequence of the shattering experience of losing his wife to pneumonia in 1964. Significantly, in an interview with Chris Hall for *The Guardian* in 2014, his daughter, Fay, remembers the aftermath of her mother's death and the moment she recalls places Ballard into a car: "I remember my mother dying, quite vividly, and afterwards sitting in the car – a big old Armstrong Siddeley I think – and I was in the passenger seat and Daddy just cried and cried" (Hall). His wife's death "wasn't something he could talk about. It was a wound that never healed" (Hall), and it is not hard to imagine that most of his work is an attempt to deal with the crushing fact of being deprived of a life with his beloved wife in a single, harsh moment of her death and of having to continue on his own – broken and wounded – to make meaning of life. Obviously, Ballard could not have prevented his wife's death, although, as suggested by his daughter and his biography, he would have done anything to have been able to do so. But when it comes to cars, people did not (and still today do not) seem to have the desire to be careful and wary; rather, they plunge right into the experience of speed and exhilaration, and, as he testifies in the footnote to *The Atrocity Exhibition* (76), it is the people's fascination with danger and desire for cars as vehicles of death that captured his artistic imagination.

After the publication of the short story "Crash!" in *Eventsheet*, the magazine of The Institute of Contemporary Arts in London, in February 1969, Ballard did not abandon the material. Rather, he incorporated it into his experimental novel *The Atrocity Exhibition* (1970), which represents a kind of an adaptation of the story into a larger context of an individual's inner world. The story has a kind of a run-on supertext which is set off from the rest of the text by being published in bold print, and it represents the story of Tallis, a protagonist whose name changes constantly (to Talbert, Traven, Travis, Talbot, and so on) as his psychosis deepens. The novel's text serves as a kind of explanation or interpretation of the supertext (see fig. 2), that is, of Tallis's mind, in which the exterior world of the 1960s and his interior world seem to merge, creating a very daunt-

ing and fascinating Ballardian universe that clearly seems to be psychological, albeit rooted in the actual life.



**Fig. 2.** Screenshot of the beginning of Chapter 12 of *The Atrocity Exhibition* (Ballard, *The Atrocity Exhibition* 74).

The dual, somewhat enigmatic, structure points not only to the fact that the workings of an individual's mind will forever remain a mystery to others but also to the fact that it is difficult to exhaust any topic, especially one as complex as the relationship between humans and cars, life and death, and desire and danger in a single work of art. The novel does not seem "finished" because it cannot hope to deal with the topic completely; there will always be a different point of view or a different focus that could be taken with respect to humans and cars: sexuality seems to be very prominent in most adaptations of "Crash!," but the array of topics that arise from the human-car constellation is immense: from those dealing with the body – such as pain (physical and mental), injury, 303

life and death, mutilation, scars, and prosthetics, over those dealing with psyche – love, loneliness, desire, trauma, psychopathy, and sociopathy, all the way to those dealing with the economic issues such as money, class, status, celebrity figures, and so on. Clearly, in a paper such as this, it is impossible to deal with all the possible interpretations of Ballard's works and adaptations of those works; nevertheless, the idea is to highlight his intention to continuously work on one and the same topic, adapting it for different media in order to bring to front as many of instances of meaning as possible.

One of such adaptations that tends to be overlooked by critics because it is not a text or film is the arts exhibition titled "Crashed Cars" (see fig. 3), which Ballard sets up at the New Arts Lab gallery in London at about the same time as he incorporates the short story into the novel. The exhibition features three cars taken from a repair shop:

The Pontiac was a model from the mid-fifties, and thus represented a particularly baroque phase in American car styling, while the Mini symbolised the fun-loving mobility of the swinging sixties. The sober and conservative saloon, the A60, stood for the Mini's exact antithesis. However, through the catastrophe of the car crash, now all were in a sense equivalent; smashed and levelled to the raw material of their crushed metal, broken glass, and stained upholstery. (Ford)



**Fig. 3.** In preparation for the exhibition, Sally Porter places a price tag on the crashed Pontiac. Photo from the press release to Ballard’s Crashed Cars exhibition; “Crash and the Aesthetics of Disappearance”; Ballardian.com, 22 Oct. 2013, <http://www.ballardian.com/crash-and-the-aesthetics-of-disappearance>.

For Ballard, the car was one of the key symbols of the twentieth century (Ford), along with the publicity industry (marketing and ad campaigns), which is why it captured his imagination so vividly and persistently.<sup>5</sup> Although the subsequent adaptations, his novel *Crash* and Cronenberg’s film *Crash*, in particular, highlight the perverse sexuality of the protagonists, Ballard was quite explicit about the importance and richness of the symbol of a car, which went far beyond the sexual and which heavily echoed the ideas of Marinetti and the

<sup>5</sup> It is interesting to note that the Gagosian Gallery in London organized a similar exhibition titled *Crash. Homage to J.G. Ballard* in 2010. From their press release we can find out that the exhibition joined artists who preceded Ballard, those who were his contemporaries and those who came after, which illustrates the potency of the motif of the car crash that is being continuously adapted (“Crash. Homage to J.G. Ballard”).

futurists, who exalted in the speed and danger of the car, and who "want[ed] to hymn the man at the wheel, who hurls the lance of his spirit across the Earth, along the circle of its orbit" (Marinetti 21). Marinetti saw the car as a symbol of liberation from the old, from history and tradition, and suggested that "[a]rt, in fact, can be nothing but violence, cruelty, and injustice" (23). Ballard reflects on these ideas and futurist visions, and also sees the car as the symbol of a new capitalist world that we are inhabiting, in which the material becomes the object of our desires.<sup>6</sup> Unlike the futurists, he is less enthusiastic about the "speed, drama and aggression, the worlds of advertising and consumer goods, engineering and mass manufacture, and the shared experience of moving together through an elaborately signalled landscape" (Ballard, "The Car, the Future" 262) that converge in the symbol of the car. The futurist breakdown of hierarchies, contempt for history and old age, and the exultations of youth and body seem to be shallow and unsatisfying, demanding always more and more outrageous ways of quenching the unattainable desires of an individual, leading ultimately to death. At the same time, their intent on replacing the old with both the new and the young inevitably echoes the ideas of consumerism and a society in which it no longer makes sense to repair things,<sup>7</sup> but rather to replace them with new ones in a symbolic, illusory attempt to prolong youth and life itself. Obviously, the new is reserved only for those who can afford it. In the "Crashed Cars" exhibition, such desires as well as class differences, as epitomized in the object of the car, are annihilated in the chilling sight of mangled cars, suggesting that death is the ultimate outcome for all. In this way, this particular adaptation displays class awareness and highlights the social and economic significance of insatiable consumption as suggested by the images of the car of a particular make and of car crash motifs.

In the subsequent video adaptation of the same material, however, Ballard deals more strikingly with sexuality and gender, as both the motifs of the car, of the crashed car, and of the (female, injured, passive) body seem to bear sexual connotations. The short film is directed by Harley Cokeliss and starring Bal-

<sup>6</sup> Ballard's vision of the car as the embodiment of mass culture and production is very similar to that of Aldous Huxley, whose *Brave New World* elevates Henry Ford – due to his perfecting of the assembly line and production of the Model T – to a divine status of "our Ford" (63), "allowing for Ballard's novel to be interpreted in the context of consumerist dystopian fiction."

<sup>7</sup> Once again, the parallel between this concept and the chanting expression of the consumerist spirit: "Ending is better than mending, ending is better than mending, ending is better. . . ." (44), in Huxley's work is inevitable.



lard along with Gabriella Drake. Ballard also does the voice-over by reading extracts from “Crash!” and other parts of *The Atrocity Exhibition*, which Baxter and Wymer see as “a rehearsal for what was to come” (3). Instead of being a fully developed narrative, the film combines images of crash tests, close-ups of the “mannequin-like” Drake and manly, dominating Ballard, of empty car parks, car interiors, motorway signs, and Ballard driving (Baxter and Wymer 3). The mangled car and injured body as fetishes are far more surreal and subtle than in their later incarnations, the novel *Crash* and its adaptation, Cronenberg’s film *Crash*.

With the novel *Crash* published in 1973, Ballard seems to have chosen the issue of sexuality as one that seems to be most striking in the act and the image of a car crash. The novel’s intensity, its abject aesthetics, and rough taboo sexuality were seen as psychotic and perverse, possibly even dangerous as the novel transcended the contemporary audience’s and critics’ tastes and knowledge. In that sense, it was Ballard’s final adaptation of the topic – his literary masterpiece, a relevant text that still intrigues the readers and critics alike. Thus, rather than suggesting that adaptations merely “breathe life” into the written word, the paper points to the conclusion that the form and content are mutually influential and that, in this case, the novel *Crash* itself is an adaptation, rather than a hypotext, which it only becomes in 1996 to David Cronenberg as he adapts it to film. Ironically, as with all true yet violent artistic creations, the novel and film’s disturbing and “sexual but not erotic” (Cronenberg qtd. in Romney) depiction of perverse desires, the bizarre fulfilment of which takes precedence over one’s own life, still deeply rooted in the real-life consumerist spirit of insatiability, proved to be too “clinical” (Romney) for the general public.

## Conclusion

To conclude, Ballard’s adaptation of his initial ideas across literary forms and media testifies to the importance of adaptation as a process and method of creating art. The complexity of the relationship between the source text and its many adaptations has already contributed to the deconstruction of, in Derrida’s terms, the hierarchy (opposition) between the original and copy. Therefore, not only does every human (artistic) creation find the basis for its creation in the dialogic nature of texts, following the ever-lasting interplay of meanings acquired from the previous and opening the path for countless new ones, but also adaptations are proven to reshape the meaning of the chronologically primary texts. 307



Ballard's adaptations of his own ideas illustrate the complexity of the creative process and show how an adaptation cites the source and grafts it into a new context, giving it a new function (Ray 127), both aesthetic and political. This shows how literature, film, and other forms of art participate in the process of making of meaning that is inherent to humans. In addition, the treatment of the subject of the car crash, both by Ballard and other adaptors, illustrates the never-ending process of adapting one's own or others' ideas and testifies to the fact that every adaptation of a previous source is in fact a new, original work of art that can, in turn, serve as a source for subsequent adaptations in the same or in a different medium.

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## KAKO JE „CRASH!“ POSTAO *CRASH*: ADAPTACIJOM DO ADAPTACIJE

### Sažetak

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#### Ljubica MATEK

Filozofski fakultet

Sveučilišta Josipa Jurja Strossmayera u Osijeku

Lorenza Jägera 9, HR – 31 000 Osijek

lmatek@ffos.hr

#### Jelena PATAKI

Filozofski fakultet

Sveučilišta Josipa Jurja Strossmayera u Osijeku

Lorenza Jägera 9, HR – 31 000 Osijek

jelena.pataki@gmail.com

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J. G. Ballard više je puta i u različitim medijima adaptirao vlastite radove koji se bave kontroverznom problematikom seksualne i senzualne energije koja proizlazi iz automobilske nesreće. U ovome se radu, na temelju Ballardovih adaptacija, pokazuje da je adaptacija temeljna stvaralačka metoda u književnosti i umjetnosti s obzirom na to da postupak adaptacije podrazumijeva refleksiju o različitim estetskim i društvenopolitičkim idejama te njihovu pomniju razradu u okviru novonastalog umjetničkog djela. Ballardova kratka priča „Crash!“ („Sudar!“) prvi je puta objavljena u časopisu *Event-sheet* Instituta za suvremenu umjetnost (ICA) u veljači 1969., a kasnije ju je Ballard inkorporirao u svoj eksperimentalni roman *The Atrocity Exhibition* (1970., *Izložba užasa*). Istodobno, Ballard ideje iskazane u priči i poglavlju romana dalje adaptira te ih oblikuje u umjetničku izložbu „Crashed Cars“ (London, 1970.), a potom priču s redateljem Harleyem Cokelissom adaptira u kratki film *Crash!* (1971.) u kojemu i sam glumi. Svoje bavljenje ovom tematikom Ballard zaokružuje objavom romana *Crash* (1973., *Sudar*). Ballardovi postupci pri adaptaciji vlastitih ideja u različitim medijima i žanrovima svjedoče o važnosti adaptacije kao kreativne umjetničke metode i procesa. Uvriježeno mišljenje da adaptacija samo „daje život“ pisanoj riječi ukazuje na simplističko i nepotpuno razumijevanje pojma adaptacije. Priroda interakcije sadržaja i forme istodobno je kreativna i analitička, a postupak adaptacije nikada nije konačan. U ovome slučaju to se vidi iz činjenice da je Ballardov najglasovitiji roman *Crash* zapravo adaptacija njegovih ideja prethodno iskazanih tekstem, izložbom i filmom, a roman sam postaje hipotekst tek 1996. kada ga David Cronenberg ponovno adaptira u medij filma. Složenost odno-

sa između izvornika i njegovih adaptacija dekonstruirala je, u Derridaovskom smislu, hijerarhijski i međusobno suprotstavljen odnos između „originala“ i kopije, dovodeći u pitanje ontologiju „originala“. Ballardove krosmedijalne i transmedijalne adaptacije vlastitih ideja pokazuju, kako bi to formulirao Ray, da adaptacija citira izvor i presađuje ga u novi kontekst, dajući mu novu estetsku i političku funkciju.

**Ključne riječi:** „Crash!“, Crash, J. G. Ballard, Harley Cokeliss, David Cronenberg, adaptacija, hipotekst, dekonstrukcija, krosmedijalni, transmedijalni

