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INSTITUTE OF LANGUAGES, LITERATURE AND TRANSLATION STUDIES

ERIKA PETRAVIČIŪTĖ

SEMIOTIC CHALLENGES OF TRANSLATABILITY IN DAVID CRONENBERG'S CINEMATIC ADAPTATION (1996) OF JAMES GRAHAM BALLARD'S NOVEL "CRASH" AND ITS LITHUANIAN VOICED-OVER AND SUBTITLED VERSIONS

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Scientific adviser_____

(signature)

Prof. Dr Jadvyga Krūminienė

Graduate student_____

(signature)

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ERIKA PETRAVIČIŪTĖ

SEMIOTINIAI IŠVERČIAMUMO IŠŠŪKIAI DAVIDO CRONENBERGO REŽISUOTOJE JAMESO GRAHAMO BALLARDO ROMANO „AVARIJA“ KINO ADAPTACIJOJE (1996 M.) IR JOS LIETUVIŠKOSE UŽKLOTINIO VERTIMO BEI SUBTITRUOTOSE VERSIJOSE

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INTRODUCTION

The world people live in today is increasingly multilingual, multicultural, and multimodal. As native speakers of different languages travel, relocate or simply seek to consume media produced in a language other than their mother tongue, the need for translation in general—and audiovisual translation in particular, given the growing popularity of audiovisual modes of artistic expression—becomes more pertinent. So do the issues related to the aspect of translatability. Rather than including a relatively straightforward transformation of a message communicated in one language to an equivalent message communicated in another, the translator's task of moving between languages is, in fact, all about negotiating different cultures, lifestyles, sign and belief systems. Naturally, this adds new difficulties to the purely linguistic challenges already present in any instance of translation. In a society both progressively more fractured and more globalised, (un)translatability can—and does—turn into a central problem.

As this MA thesis attempts to reveal, translatability is an inherently semiotic concern with different sign systems and meaning-making processes. This is why the semiotic **method** of analysis is employed in the thesis at hand, combined with comparative research. Such a methodological choice is in keeping with the general trends of modern translation studies: as Ritva Hartama-Heinonen notes, a "tendency of widening conceptions, from a purely linguistic direction to one that is more semiotic" (2015, p. 48) can be observed in this field of inquiry. The research perspective here moves beyond the traditional understanding of a text as being purely verbal, and instead focuses on the analysis of "multimedial, multimodal, multisemiotic" (ibid.) texts, which, in their turn, require a multidisciplinary approach. It is this kind of research, with the concept of translatability serving as the point of contact between the theoretical fields of semiotics and translation studies, that is pursued in the given paper.

The **aim** of the thesis is to identify the challenges of translatability observed in the intersemiotic translation of J. G. Ballard's novel *Crash* (1973) into the film under the same title (1996) by David Cronenberg, as well as to reveal the points of translational resistance and compare the creative solutions generated by them as detected in the Lithuanian voice-over translation of the English filmic dialogue, as well as the Lithuanian rendition within the audiovisual translation mode of subtitling.

The following **objectives** serve as the basis for the furtherance of the above aim:

1. To examine the semiotic concepts of 'sign' and 'meaning-making' as they relate to the notion of translatability.
2. To discuss the concept of (un)translatability as a creative challenge encountered by the translator.
3. To determine the specific translational challenges posed by the intersemiotic translation of a novel into a film, as well as by the subtitling and the voice-over modes of audiovisual translation.
4. To explore the areas of translational resistance observed in David Cronenberg's intersemiotic translation of J. G. Ballard's novel *Crash*.
5. To discuss the translational challenges and creative solutions generated by them as detected in the translation of David Cronenberg's cinematic adaptation from English into Lithuanian within the audiovisual mode of voice-over.
6. To compare the above challenges and solutions to, as well as contrast them with, the solutions employed in the Lithuanian subtitles of the cinematic adaptation in question.

To achieve these objectives, the thesis relies on a bipartite structure consisting of a theoretical and an empirical section. The former is divided into four chapters. In the first chapter titled *Semiotics as Viewed Through the Lens of Translation*, the implicit connection between semiotics and translation is discussed. The second chapter, titled *Translatability as a Criterion for the Production of Meaning, and Untranslatability as a Catalyst for Creativity*, focuses on the notion of translatability approached herein as a necessary prerequisite for the construction of meaning, as well as on untranslatability as a potential impetus for creativity. The third chapter titled *Caught in Between the Semiotic Systems: Screen Adaptation as Intersemiotic Translation* explores the Jakobsonian category of intersemiotic translation, as well as posits screen adaptation as one of its central modes. In the fourth and final chapter of the theoretical section, entitled *Subtitling vs. Voice-Over Translation: Translational Resistances of a Polysemiotic Text*, the audiovisual modes of subtitling and voice-over translation are examined in relation to the specific translational challenges that they pose.

The empirical section of the given paper begins with a chapter entitled *"A Playing Field Where Multiple Meanings Crash": J. G. Ballard's* Crash *From Jean Baudrillard to David Cronenberg*. The chapter in question covers the key points in the biography of J. G. Ballard, the

author of the novel that serves as the basis for the case study contained herein, before discussing the novel's reception and examining the major themes, motifs, and the inherently semiotic concerns that are to be discovered at the core of the book. The subchapter *Cronenberg's* Crash*: From the Verbal Code to the Audiovisual Mode* begins with the discussion of the biography and the artistic inclinations of David Cronenberg, the filmmaker behind the novel's infamous screen adaptation (1996). This is followed by the exploration of the areas of translational resistance detected in Cronenberg's intersemiotic rendition of Ballard's novel, with particular attention being paid to the source text's semiotic subject matter and pervasive preoccupation with meaning-making processes. The analysis then moves on to the examination of the film's dialogic lines in comparison to the narrative lines in the novel, with the discussion in question making up another subchapter titled *The Filmic Dialogue of Cronenberg's* Crash. In the last chapter of the thesis, *Translating the (Un)translatable: Cronenberg's* Crash *and its Translation(s) Into Lithuanian*, the translational challenges, as well as the creative solutions they have helped generate, observed in the Lithuanian renditions of David Cronenberg's cinematic adaptation within the audiovisual translation modes of voice-over and subtitling are identified. Finally, conclusions are provided, wherein the observations made over the course of the case study are summarised.

1. SEMIOTICS AS VIEWED THROUGH THE LENS OF TRANSLATION

The extent of theoretical and practical issues encompassed by the virtually limitless horizons of semiotics may dazzle the curious newcomer. From literary semiotics to biosemiotics, from semiotics of law to semiotics of mathematics… As a subject that deals, first and foremost, with meaning, and does so in the broadest possible sense, semiotics seems to find elements tied meaningfully to its own concerns in every field of academic inquiry. The search for a comprehensive definition of the term "semiotics" poses a formidable challenge on its own accord, once again requiring scholars to discover and pin down the meaning of something elusive. Jerzy Pelc, for example, has distinguished at least sixteen different definitions of semiotics formulated by various semiotic schools (Pelc, 1984, p. v-x). In order to delve into research that includes the theory of semiotics as one of its components, the researcher must first settle on the definition that he or she is going to use.

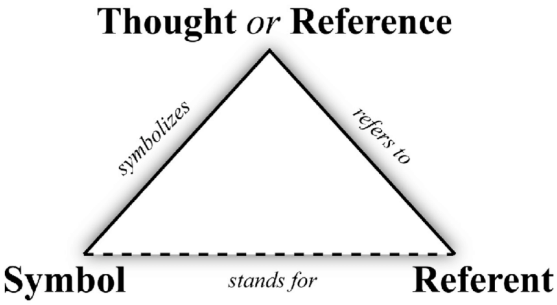
In its widest conception, semiotics can be defined as a science of signs and the processes involved in meaning-making. Nonetheless, since, as the prominent semiotician Charles Sanders Peirce is reported to have put it, "the entire universe is perfused with signs" (Peirce, cited in Nöth, 1995, p. 4), a definition like this is hardly comprehensive. The question of whether semiotics can be referred to as a "science" has been raised by numerous theoreticians as well. For instance, Oswald Ducrot and Tzvetan Todorov maintain that semiotics may be viewed more fruitfully as "a project than an established science" (Ducrot & Todorov, 1972, p. 90). Other scholars have also been hesitant to refer to semiotics as strictly a scientific discipline. While discussing the subject in cooperation with Joseph Courtés, Julius Greimas concludes that "semiotics proposes itself both as a project for research and as already ongoing research" (Courtés & Greimas, 1979, p. 291). In the same vein, Thomas Sebeok settles on calling the semiotic project "a consistently shared point of view <…>, having as its subject matter all systems of signs irrespective of their substance and without regard to the species of the emitter or receiver involved" (Sebeok, 1976, p. 64). Numerous other researchers emphasise the inherent interdisciplinarity of semiotics, with "linguists, logicians, philosophers, psychologists, biologists, anthropologists, psychopathologists, aestheticians, and sociologists" (Morris, 1938, p. 1) having been involved in semiotic research at some point since the subject's inception. If, to put it in Sebeok's words, semiotics is indeed "a shared point of view", it is itself made up of numerous different viewpoints, each bringing the input from other disciplines

into the semiotic perspective. Thus, rather than constricting semiotics to the label of "science", researchers may indeed broaden its boundaries by approaching it as an interdisciplinary research project.

To return to the problem of signs and their meaning, it should be emphasised that the category of a semiotic sign is virtually boundless. Signs *can* be linguistic, yet they are not necessarily such. Within the conception of semiotics, anything that communicates meaning to the interpreter can be constituted as a sign. This can involve verbal expressions, non-verbal gestures, symbols, cultural artifacts, even entire cultures. According to Roman Jakobson, "the subject matter of semiotic is the communication of any messages whatever" (Jakobson, 1973, p. 32). Hence, anything that is perceived as meaningful is a sign, and signs that are transmitted in a similar manner (i.e., governed by the same semiotic code) make up individual sign systems.

However, a question then arises as to how the meaning of these signs is *made*. What criteria must "meaning" meet to be perceived as such? It is surprising how often semioticians turn to the notion of translation when faced with the problem of meaning-making. Peirce defines meaning as "the translation of a sign into another system of signs" (Peirce, 1933, p. 127). Countless other semiotic scholars also believe that translation is of vital importance for the construction of meaning, language, and communication in general. Even the famous "meaning triangle" created by Charles Kay Ogden and Ivor Armstrong Richards (see the figure below) contains an element of translation in it. Consider:

Figure 1. *Richard and Ogden's semiotic triangle*



Source: https://www.researchgate.net/figure/The-semiotic-triangle-models-how-a-linguistic-symbol-relates-to-the-object-ie_fig1_216512733

As Evangelos Kourdis and Susan Petrilli describe it when explaining what this triangle stands for,

> the 'symbol' and the 'referent' are situated at the two extremes of the base. But Ogden and Richards place another actor at the apex of the triangle, 'thought' <…>. Unlike the other two sides of the triangle, the line joining the two ends at the bottom is dotted. The intention is to indicate that this path cannot be followed: it is not possible to pass directly from the 'sign' (in Ogden and Richard's terminology the 'symbol') to what the sign stands for <…>. In order to identify the precise referent at play at each specific occurrence, it will be necessary to take a longer trajectory, that passes through the apex of the triangle, that is to say, through the work of interpretation, of translation. (Kourdis & Petrilli, 2020, p. 11)

It should be noted, however, that, as seen from the semiotic perspective, translation is a much broader notion than the relatively straightforward rendering of a message communicated in one language to a message transmitted with the help of a different system of linguistic signs. Victoria Welby uses the term "translative thinking" (1983, p. 34) to describe "the human signifying capacity" (Welby, cited in Petrilli, 2014, p. 189) in general. For her, translative thinking is an automatic process "in which everything suggests or reminds us of something else" (ibid.). By relating signs to other signs, transforming the meaning expressed in one sign system to its equivalent in a different code, the users of these sign systems produce meaning—or, to employ the semiotic terminology, get engaged in the process of semiosis. Winfried Nöth notes that the same could be said about meaning, expressed by means of linguistic signs, when it is viewed from the point of psycho- and neurosemiotics:

> language processing has often been described as involving transformations between different modes of coding. Thus, early psycholinguistic models of communication (cf. Hörmann 1967: 7) describe linguistic encoding and decoding as processes of translation: the speaker transforms intentional behavior into acoustic signals, the hearer transforms the signals into interpretative behavior. (Nöth, 1995, p. 239),

As a meaningful transformation through "encoding and decoding" of signs, translation is unavoidably located at the very core of semiotics. It is a fundamental component of any meaning-making process. Petrilli goes so far as to claim that semiosis "cannot subsist without translation" (Petrilli, 2014, p. 189). Indeed, the role of translation is integral to "the very constitution of the sign, verbal and nonverbal" (ibid.). Without the transmutative power of translation, conceived of here as the replacement of codes with different types of codes, new meanings, interpretations, readings and significant constellations of signs could not be produced.

2. TRANSLATABILITY AS A CRITERION FOR THE PRODUCTION OF MEANING, AND UNTRANSLATABILITY AS A CATALYST FOR CREATIVITY

The arguments discussed in the previous chapter allow for the positing of translation as a process that is more or less synonymous with meaning-making, and for considering translatability as one of the primary criteria for the meaningfulness of a sign. According to Welby, "a thing is significant <…> in proportion as it is expressible through bare sign or pictorial symbol or representative action" (Welby, 1983, p. 150). To clarify the idea, the "thing" that the scholar is speaking of here—and that can in and of itself be a sign of something else—can only obtain meaning through the process of being translated into other signs or symbols. The sign proper, so to speak, is, and must always remain, involved in translation.

As synonyms for the concept of translatability, some theoreticians use the terms *representability* and *interpretability*. Both of these may help explain the original term, as well as expand its boundaries. As Hartama-Heinonen puts it:

> to complete its semiotic signhood, a sign must meet certain criteria, namely, representability and interpretability/translatability. In other words, a sign must be able to represent its object, to address the mind of an interpreter, and to determine an interpretant or a chain of interpretants, thus producing an interpretation and a translation. (Hartama-Heinonen, 2015, p. 47)

The interpretant considered in the quote above is equivalent to the "thought" in the semiotic triangle explored previously. If a sign cannot be translated into an interpretable thought, if it cannot be represented through the means of something else, it cannot function within any semiotic code. Furthermore, the translated/interpreted/represented sign must then in itself be capable of being transformed into something else. To quote Petrilli, "meaning is engendered in translational processes of deferral from one sign into the next" (Petrilli, 2014, p. 190). Hence, meaning can only ever be developed under conditions akin to a never-ending chain of substitution.

It can be reasonably claimed that the translatable is always meaningful; and, vice versa, that the meaningful is always translatable. However, a question may then arise as to where this equivalence places things that are deemed to be "untranslatable". What should the translator—this generator of meaning both in the wider semiotic and narrower linguistic senses of the word—do when faced with a sign that does not lend itself so readily to the transformative process of translation? More generally, if the criterion of translatability is at the very core of each sign proper,

can there really exist signs that are untranslatable? Within the context of semiotics, is an "untranslatable sign" not an impossible oxymoron? To try and answer these questions, analysis of the counterpart of the concept of translatability—i.e., *untranslatability*—should be attempted.

In their paper *Theorising (Un)performability and (Un)translatability* (2021), Dominic Glynn and James Hadley note that over the past few years, "'untranslatability' has been a much-discussed topic in translation studies" (Glynn & Hadley, 2021, p. 20). The authors qualify this statement by deeming "the state of its theorisation <…> relatively rudimentary, focusing in large part on assertions that specific texts, or textual features, cannot be translated on the basis of certain cultural, ideological, or linguistic idiosyncrasies" (ibid.). What can be gathered from this claim is that while some texts, or elements of texts, may be meaningful within a certain historical, geographical, social, political or ideological context, their meaning might be so heavily context-bound in some cases that it is, quite simply, not transportable to the context of a different nature. A viewpoint like this helps expand the field within which the concept of meaning is observed and explored: rather than being entirely abstract, isolated, and tied solely to the signs that immediately surround it, meaning is bound just as much to the entire system in which it functions—that is to say, to the world at large.

Glynn and Hadley go on to provide a brief history of the concept of untranslatability. According to the scholars, "historically it has been as closely bound to questions surrounding what 'ought' to be translated as to what 'can' be translated" (ibid.). The issue of translatability was thus, first and foremost, conceived of as an ideological problem. As the authors note, Martin Luther and William Tyndale are just two examples of "translators sanctioned by religious authorities for daring to translate the Bible from Latin, the language of the Church, into German and English respectively" (ibid.). Texts that are considered to be untranslatable on the basis of ideology are not an entirely outdated concept either. There are still regimes to be found nowadays "where political censorship makes certain passages or whole texts untranslatable on ideological grounds" (ibid.). Glynn and Hadley provide North Korea as an example of a country where literary translation in general is not allowed to be practiced even today.

Next to ideology, there are also issues of genre. For instance, Jakobson maintains that "poetry is by definition untranslatable" (Jakobson, 1959, p. 232). However, a question may then arise as to where such a statement puts the numerous translated versions of poetry that have been

available for centuries. Jakobson resolves this problem by excluding poetry from the field of translation proper, and instead granting such literary works the label of "creative transposition" (ibid.). It can indeed be argued that because poetry is linked so closely to the unique melody of its original language, it can never be properly rendered by using the tools of a different semio-linguistic system. If it is to be transported to a different linguistic code, this can only ever be done in part, with the original source text serving as a general source of inspiration rather than a firm foundation on which the target text is constructed.

While semiotic researchers employ the concept of translatability to refer to the general ability of signs to be replaced by, or interpreted with the help of, other signs, translation studies tend to employ a narrower approach. This is, of course, quite natural, given the considerably more limited scope of the latter field, focused as it is primarily on interlinguistic and intralinguistic translation. While Glynn and Hadley do concede that "translation studies has, since the latter half of the twentieth century, largely moved away from prescriptivist statements of what 'ought' to be done towards descriptivist statements of what 'is' done" (Glynn & Hadley, 2021, p. 21), they also note that when it comes to the scientific exploration of the subject of translatability, most considerations in this specific field are nowadays still largely "equivalence-based" (ibid.). If a certain word or phrase of the source language does not correspond to a sufficiently equivalent word or phrase in the target language, that word or phrase is often relegated to the domain of untranslatability. To claim that something is untranslatable is, conventionally, to claim that it is *impossible to translate*. A statement like this is finite and non-negotiable: it maintains that the task at hand simply cannot be performed. Yet, Glynn and Hadley offer a different approach by stating the following:

> if untranslatability has come to refer to the resistance posed by certain linguistic or cultural items to translation, it is not synonymous with the impossibility of translating such terms. Rather, the evidence that the translations exist, and strategies have been found to mitigate such resistance, demonstrates that this very resistance constitutes a source of creative opportunity. (Glynn & Hadley, 2021, p. 22)

Thus, it would be a mistake to equate the term "untranslatability" to the notion of impossibility. What it should instead refer to is *resistance*—that is to say, a challenge, an obstacle to be overcome by the translator, a difficulty that, instead of impeding the process of translation, may lead to the employment of less conventional, and hence more fruitful, translation strategies. The scholars go even further and proclaim that "it is the very declaration of impossibility that underpins the

creativity required to find the work-around solution" (Glynn & Hadley, 2021, p. 23). Moreover, the label of untranslatability can sometimes serve as "the very reason [for] some texts or textual features [to be] translated" (ibid.). Both translatability and untranslatability are always relative and, as such, should not be viewed as fixed, finite categories. Once the often truly impossible requirement of equivalence, of semantic sameness, is discarded, translation is free to create new meanings, become actively engaged in the complex processes of semiosis and, ultimately, attain its own unique "signhood" within its own singular context.

Given the arguments presented above, the very validity of the terms *translatability* and *untranslatability* may reasonably come into question. Since each case of translational resistance only "bolsters creative activity by setting an obstacle to be negotiated" (Glynn & Hadley, 2021, p. 26), nothing can be said to be truly, definitively untranslatable. Nevertheless, when analysing translations, "this identified constraint and the translation strategy it necessitates" (Glynn & Hadley, 2021, p. 27) should still be acknowledged and discussed. Whether it is "formal features, idiomatic or idiosyncratic word choices, contextually grounded utterances, or ideologically problematic concepts" (Glynn & Hadley, 2021, p. 29), the challenges posed by such textual elements are still very real and hence deserve recognition. As a way of solving this conundrum, Glynn and Hadley suggest reconceptualising both terms by bracketing the prefix *un-*. In doing so, the following conceptual shift is achieved:

> the (un)translatable is acknowledged to require a carefully negotiated, creative translation strategy that will often step outside the narrow definition of translation as equivalence-based, but can, nonetheless achieve a result that is acceptable for target readers. Thus, each word, text, action, and passage is simultaneously translatable and untranslatable, <…> to an extent to be established through comparative, evidence-driven research, and not simply accepted *a priori* labels. (ibid.)

Based on the semiotic concept of translatability, a sign is meaningful insofar as it is translatable into a different sign. This does not presuppose the condition of exact equivalence, but rather a perpetual process of renewal, of interpreting and reinterpreting, of meaning made slightly different in each instance of meaning-making. It is these differences, subtle at times and more pronounced at others, that ultimately sustain the continued generation of meaning. It is the challenge of (un)translatability, with its supposed impossibility, that ultimately renders translation possible.

3. CAUGHT IN BETWEEN THE SEMIOTIC SYSTEMS: INTERSEMIOTIC TRANSLATION AND SCREEN ADAPTATION

It has already been established in this paper that as a research project, semiotics is concerned with meaningful signs and meaning-making processes; and that translatability can reasonably be viewed as one of the primary criteria for the meaningfulness of a sign to be fulfilled. In other words, as Kourdis and Petrilli put it, translatability is "a fundamental property of all semiotic systems" (Kourdis & Petrilli, 2020, p. 6), regardless of the exact nature of each. As the authors maintain, meaning is endlessly generated "through translational processes <…>, across semiosic spheres and disciplines, across intersemiotic or transemiotic spaces in the signifying universe, verbal and nonverbal" (ibid.). When viewed from this perspective, translation reveals itself to be a much broader concept than a simple transfer of (more or less) equivalent information transported from one linguistic code to another. Rather, it is a complex, intricate process of transposition, which involves transporting a given sign from one system to another—be it another linguistic code or a different mode of expression altogether. It is precisely the latter intersystemic movement that is encapsulated by the concept of intersemiotic translation.

The famous tripartite classification of translation into "intralingual", "interlingual" and "intersemiotic" was developed by Roman Jakobson, who sought to expand the meaning of translation beyond the relatively narrow bounds of purely verbal codes. Indeed, some theoreticians credit Jakobson and his classification system with initiating the semiotic shift in translation research in the late 1950s. (see Hartama-Heinonen, 2015, p. 49). The Jakobsonian system of translation is explained by the scholar in his essay titled *On Linguistic Aspects of Translation* (1959). In it, Jakobson posits *interlingual translation* as "interpretation of verbal signs by means of some other language" (Jakobson, 1959, p. 232). This is, so to speak, "translation proper" (ibid.). On the other hand, *intralingual translation* (also referred to as "rewording" by some scholars) includes "interpretation of verbal signs by means of other [verbal] signs of the same language" (ibid.). Finally, *intersemiotic translation*, also called "transmutation" by Jakobson, is used to describe the work of interpreting "verbal signs by means of signs of non-verbal sign systems" (ibid.). Thus, unlike the first two types of translation, the latter category involves texts that are, to borrow Henrik Gottlieb's term, "semiotically non-equivalent" (Gottlieb, 2005, p. 3). Given the fact that translation is generally perceived to have at least some degree of equivalence as its

ultimate goal, the translational conundrum of seeking equivalence within non-equivalent systems can confidently be said to deserve further exploration, particularly when it comes to the problem of translatability in cases of intersemiotic transfer.

A translational mechanism similar to the one at work in traditional interlingual translation can be observed in the relationship between various semiotic codes and forms of artistic expression, such as cinema, theatre, painting and literature. The most pertinent pairing within the context of this thesis, however, is that of literature and film. Respectively, these two represent the verbal and the audiovisual semiotic systems, and the movement of meaning transposed from the verbal code to the audiovisual one can most readily be observed when exploring the genre of screen adaptation. When compared, literary and cinematic texts appear to be "almost totally separate on the expressive plane" (Dusi, 2015, p. 181). A novel is made up entirely of verbal signs—that is, at least when it comes to its surface. A film, on the contrary, is inherently polysemiotic. As an audiovisual text, a cinematic product is, according to Frederic Chaume, "a semiotic construct comprising several signifying codes that operate simultaneously in the production of meaning" (Chaume, 2004, p. 16). The key semiotic codes identified by Chaume as operating in a film include sounds, images, and verbal expressions. Regardless of the precise nature of these codes, they all consist of meaningful signs—and, as such, these signs must, by their very definition, be translatable.

While the forms of a novel and a film—i.e., the semiotic codes of expression employed by them—differ radically, the "gambit of translatability" (Dusi, 2015, p. 181) remains open when it comes to their content. It is certainly true that this content is often transformed as well during the process of transmutation, yet it might still make sense to view intersemiotic translation as, first and foremost, "translation between forms" (Dusi, 2015, p. 188), that is, translation between different sign systems. Rather than representing a relatively straightforward process of "transcodification" (Dusi, 2015, p. 183) akin to what Jakobson calls "translation proper", intersemiotic translation is itself a "form of action" (ibid.) that cannot help but shape new meanings as it goes about its way. The two distinctly different semiotic models of a novel and a film put the autonomy of each into focus. As Nicola Dusi puts it, "although the issue concerned is translatability, the works <…> have their own internal coherence and cohesion" (Dusi, 2015, p. 181), which can never be replicated exactly in another format, within a distinctly separate semiotic system. Rather than embarking on

a search for equivalence, the screen adaptation must necessarily respect the boundaries of the literary source text. In cases of intersemiotic rendering, these boundaries "remain in place and function as filters, maintaining their own differences" (Dusi, 2015, p. 183). It is precisely these differences that most researchers of intersemiotic translation tend to focus on in their works.

A literary piece is primarily verbal. Given the fact that the history of cinema started with silent films, hence showing that the auditory component of a cinematic product can be disposed of if necessary, it can be claimed that a film is primarily visual. Again, a cinematic product can still function as a film without an auditory code. However, if the visual code was to be taken away, a piece of cinematic art could not reasonably be referred to as such and would require a different definition in terms of its genre. This is the main difference that Umberto Eco explores when discussing screen adaptation. In explicating Eco's view of intersemiotic translation, Dusi affirms the following:

> it is impossible to define intersemiotic transformation as a real "translation." Eco argues that in order to transpose a novel into a film it will inevitably be necessary to spell out many of one's inferences, to illustrate one's own interpretation, starting with the details of the possible world that is enacted. This possible world is rendered tangibly and shown; it is represented in the choice of characters, including, necessarily, their physical appearance and clothing <…>. Talking about intersemiotic "translation" is therefore more metaphorical than anything else according to Eco. (Dusi, 2015, p. 193)

In other words, the visual code, by its very nature, does not permit for as much ambiguity as the literary, or verbal, code does. In order to transform a novel into a film, the adaptor must necessarily add visual details, hence, in a way, imagining the setting of the novel, the physical traits of the characters, their gestures and reactions for the viewer. During this shift to a semiotic code that differs from the original code of the source text, interpretative paths may be opened up that ultimately turn into "full-scale re-semanticizations" (Dusi, 2015, p. 191). Within the context of intersemiotic translation more than within any other Jakobsonian translation category, the intricacy and complexity of meaning-making processes come into full view: these processes involve a sign searching for its interpretant, so that this interpretant can ultimately result in the creation of a different sign that necessarily adds a new meaning, or multiple meanings, to the significance of the original sign.

To refer to Jakobson's terminology once again, the category of intersemiotic translation can also be defined as *transmutation*. As Dusi notes, the prefix "trans-" here draws attention "to the notion of moving beyond the original text, passing through it, in other words, multiplying its

semantic potential" (Dusi, 2015, p. 203). When the goal involves shifting the source content to an entirely new semiotic system by often transforming the original form beyond recognition, while also applying the necessarily subjective interpretants used by the author of the target text to get closer to the meaning of the source text, translatability becomes an all-consuming issue. Add to this the fact that most screen adaptations have to contend with a radically different historical, social and ideological context when it comes to their viewership, and translational transformations gain even more pertinence.

The concept of the interpretant, and interpretation in general, is particularly important here. It is part and parcel of any translational, or meaning-making, process. The meaning of any text tackled by the translator can only ever come about as the result of "interpretative conjecture" (Dusi, 2015, p. 190). In Dusi's understanding, translation can be seen as "a special case of interpretation" (ibid.), that is, as a process of deciphering meanings behind the signs with the help of interpretants, and then rendering these signs into the signs of a different system. Hence, just like any other translation, the filmic interpretation of a work of literary fiction is mediated by the interpreter. Unlike intrasemiotic forms of translation, the category of intersemiotic rendition, where a verbal text is transformed into an audiovisual work, makes its interpretative intrusions a lot more obvious. To rely on Dusi once more:

> While the translator's point of view tends not to show itself in a literary translation (if not in the footnotes), in Eco's view the assumption of a critical point of view becomes preponderant in an adaptation, and distinguishes the specificities of an adaptation or transmutation as compared to a translation. (Dusi, 2015, p. 195)

When analysing the cases of intersemiotic translation, the researcher should focus on "the choices of the translator's text, which converge in an overall strategy arising from an interpretation of <…> the source text" (Dusi, 2015, p. 191). After all, it is the translator, whether performing intrasemiotic or intersemiotic translation, who is in charge of the interpretants both uniting and separating the source and the target texts. It is the translator who must contend with those areas of the text where translational resistance is encountered, and render the seemingly untranslatable translated, hence shaping an appropriately modified product that is nonetheless similar to the original. Regardless of whether these challenges of translatability are of a linguistic, cultural, ideological or any other nature, it is up to the translator and his or her meaning-making competence to find a way to conquer them.

By way of conclusion, it is worth returning to the view of intersemiotic translation as a separate translational category, and polysemiotic texts as a distinct textual class. According to Dusi, it could be argued that the process of intersemiotic rendering "simply emphasizes what every translation performs with regard to its source" (2015, p. 202). Hence, translation always relies on interpretation as its basis. There is always "a continual growth in meaning with respect to the source text" (ibid.), irrespective of whether the source text and the target text represent separate semiotic codes. There are scholars who, based on this all-encompassing translational similarity, put the very separation of sign systems into question. Patrick Zabalbeascoa claims that "no text can be made entirely of verbal signs because such signs always need some sort of physical support" (Zabalbeascoa, 1997, p. 338). Liisa Tiittula and Maija Hirvonen insist that "today, as texts increasingly consist of oral, written, visual, kinesic, and other alternative modalities, translators must take into consideration other sign systems beyond the mere verbal one" (Tiitula & Hirvonen, 2015, p. 252). Indeed, the reason why a novel can be transformed into a film at all is because there are layers of non-verbal signs hidden beneath the verbal surface of a literary work. As Gottlieb so aptly puts it, in screen adaptation, "a monosemiotic work (typically, a novel) is semiotically 'unzipped'", thus recreating "the underlying (poly)semiotic structure" (Gottlieb, 2005, p. 8). Therefore, when viewed from this perspective—i.e., a perspective where no text is truly monosemiotic and instead necessarily consists of different types of codes—all translation can be considered as intersemiotic in a sense. All translational processes involve "a transfer from one sign to another" (Hartama-Heinonen, 2015, p. 49) performed via the act of interpretation. All attempts at translation contend with various challenges of translatability in an effort to attain, if not equivalence, then at least an identifiable degree of similarity.

4. SUBTITLING VS. VOICE-OVER TRANSLATION: TRANSLATIONAL RESISTANCES OF A POLYSEMIOTIC TEXT

No contemporary discussion of a polysemiotic text and its potential (un)translatability could be considered complete without at least a cursory discussion of the field of audiovisual translation. This is because multimodality (defined by Gunther Kress and Theo van Leeuwen as "the use of several semiotic modes in the design of a semiotic product or event" (Kress and Van Leeuwen, 2001, p. 20), hence putting a sharp focus on the underlying polysemiotic structure of multimodal texts) lies at the very core of any audiovisual product. Multiple semiotic channels, or modalities, necessarily converge in a text of this nature "in order to produce a text-specific meaning" (Thibault, 2000, p. 311). Translating audiovisual products therefore requires an ability to always take several different sign systems—several separate semiotic codes—into account.

Alexandra Assis Rosa provides the following classification of the key semiotic channels involved in the process of audiovisual meaning-making:

> audio-verbal signs (words heard), visual-verbal signs (words read on screen), audio-nonverbal signs (sounds heard, including music and special sound effects), and visual-nonverbal signs (photographic and cinematic units, sequence of scenes, rhythm of image succession, use of camera, light and color). (Rosa, 2016, p. 4)

Thus, it can be asserted that the semiotic complexity of the audiovisual text is inherent in its very nature. Moreover, it is the juxtaposition of all these semiotic modes that creates meaning in a multimodal text, thereby highlighting the centrality of the combination of multiple semiotic channels to the significatory processes that take place in an audiovisual production. Multiple codes interweave inextricably to produce a text that is neither aural, verbal nor visual, but rather functions as an elaborate web made up of varying fusions of the three modalities indicated. Despite the fact that the final product generated by an audiovisual translator is necessarily verbal, the task at hand still requires an intrinsically polysemiotic approach, given that the ultimate goal here is to produce a verbal translation that nonetheless captures the multiple semiotic codes present in the multimodal text at hand.

Given such pervasive polysemiosis, the problem of translatability can be confidently said to gain even more pertinence in audiovisual translation. Not only must the translators render the verbal information into the target language in a manner that recaptures the meaning of the original utterance as closely as possible, but they also contend with numerous semiotic codes at play within

the text that is being translated, each leaving its mark on both the overall structure and the verbal channel wherein the audiovisual translator operates. It is not only the words that need to be rendered translatable and translated—rather, it is the entire multimodal identity of the polysemiotic text in question.

Complicating the process of rendering this type of text even further, there are multitudinous constraints woven into the very nature of each audiovisual translation mode. A closer examination of the two modes focused on in this thesis can help elucidate the character of such hindrances, producing, in and of themselves, translational resistances of their own.

When it comes to the classification of audiovisual translation modes, two key categories are generally distinguished: these are *titling* and *revoicing* (Díaz-Cintas, 2020, p. 150*)*. The first category encompasses "practices such as subtitling, surtitling, subtitling for the deaf and the hard of hearing, fansubbing and live subtitling" (ibid.). In his article *The Name and Nature of Subtitling* (2020), Jorge Díaz-Cintas provides the following definition of the subtitling mode:

> Subtitling may be described as a translation practice that consists of rendering in writing, usually at the bottom of the screen, the translation into a target language of the original dialogue exchanges uttered by different speakers, as well as all other verbal information that appears written on-screen (letters, banners, inserts) or is transmitted aurally in the soundtrack (song lyrics, voices off). (ibid.)

The subtitles are timed carefully to coincide with the spoken utterance or written information that each subtitled segment refers to, ideally appearing along with the relevant dialogic or graphic element, and disappearing as soon as the words in question have been uttered or are no longer displayed on the screen. This characteristic is behind some of the key constraints observed in the subtitling mode. Each subtitle is only present on the screen for a limited period of time. For the viewer to be able to read the subtitle in full and digest the information contained therein, it must be clear and concise, meaning that the original utterance is often condensed and distilled to contain only such information that is deemed to be absolutely necessary.

Such temporal constraints are mirrored, and further compounded, by spatial limitations. Due to the fact that subtitles are traditionally allowed to cover no more than "20% of image on the screen" (Matkivska, 2014, p. 41), only two lines of text are presented simultaneously at any given moment. Furthermore, each line is generally limited to a maximum of 35 characters. Text segmentation is also a factor: it is preferable, wherever possible, "to structure the subtitles in such

a way that they are semantically and syntactically self-contained" (167), hence rendering the adherence to spatial limitations even more complicated.

As a result, the audiovisual translators working within the field of subtitling are faced with a threefold challenge. Firstly, they must contend with the general translational difficulties inherent in transforming a message introduced in one language and representing a particular culture into a sufficiently equivalent and culturally coherent message rendered in a different language. Secondly, the multimodal coherence of the audiovisual text that the translator is working with must be maintained and carefully recreated by keeping visual, verbal and aural elements in mind at all times. Lastly, a skilled translator must achieve the above within the temporal and spatial limitations dictated by the mode of subtitling. Given its complex technical nature and the restrictions that it imposes on the subtitler, it is no wonder that researchers often view the mode in question as a primary instance of "constrained translation" (Titford, 1982, pp. 113–116.).

Another major category within the extensive field of audiovisual translation modes is called revoicing. This is an umbrella term used to denote techniques of rendering an audiovisual text into the target language by employing a form of "voice replacement", i.e., the creation of a new auditory channel that wholly or partially covers the original spoken utterances. As noted by Ieva Grigaravičiūtė & Henrik Gottlieb, four main types of revoicing can be distinguished: "dubbing, commentary, simultaneous TV interpreting, and voice-over" (Grigaravičiūtė & Gottlieb, 1999, p. 41). Given that the thesis in question examines a case of voice-over translation in its empirical section, it is this particular mode of revoicing and its specific translational limitations that are going to be focused on below.

Numerous scholars have observed the severely underprivileged position of voice-over research in comparison to the attention afforded to other, more established methods of audiovisual rendering, of which subtitling is undoubtedly one. The reasons behind this lack of consideration are multitudinous and complex. For instance, Monika Woźniak maintains that in western Europe, "the technique of voice-over—used widely in television programmes—is usually associated with <…> non-fiction products" (Woźniak, 2012, p. 209), such as documentaries, interviews, and news broadcasts. To advance her point, the scholar cites Eliana Franco, who notes a general belief held by a number of prominent audiovisual translation researchers that "translated foreign material within non-fictional output <…> constitutes uninteresting data for the purposes of research"

(Franco, cited in Woźniak, 2012, p. 210). Hence, a view of voice-over translation as a relatively "straightforward, non-problematic activity" proliferates.

As far as fictional material is concerned, there are only a handful of countries, most of them located in the eastern part of Europe, where voice-over is used widely for the rendition of feature films or TV series. Consider:

> Scholars from western Europe, most of whom have never been exposed to this kind of translation, usually limit themselves in their essays to brief tidbits about the bizarre audiovisual practice that exotic nations seem to be fond of. <…> To a certain extent, it is understandable that western scholars show little interest in the translation technique that they have not experienced first-hand and that they are incapable of directly evaluating. (Woźniak, 2012, p. 210)

Despite insufficient scholarly interest in this mode of audiovisual transfer, voice-over translation is indeed the widely preferred technique of rendering TV productions, whether fictional or otherwise, in nations such as the Ukraine, Poland and the Baltic States. Hence, far from being a curious abnormality characteristic of the "exotic" post-Soviet nations, the enduring popularity of voice-over translation in this part of the world is an intriguing subject deserving of more scholarly attention than it has received so far.

Annalisa Sandrelli defines voice-over translation as a "revoicing technique in which a translation is laid over the barely audible original" (Sandrelli, 1996, p. 428). The scholar also notes that in this mode (unlike in dubbing, where the translated soundtrack covers the original utterances entirely), the "original sound is often heard at the beginning and end of speech" (ibid.). What this results in is dual presence comparable to that observed in the subtitling mode, wherein the aural source utterances are accessible too. Voice-over translation also renders both the source and the target text available to the viewer to some extent, with the voiced-over soundtrack "encrusting the original with its translation" (ibid.).

In place of a new visual-verbal channel that subtitling constructs, an auditory channel is created and superimposed onto the already semiotically complex structure of the audiovisual source text. However, if rendered correctly, the translated utterances get incorporated organically into the audiovisual programme. Such seamless incorporation of two distinct soundtracks should, ideally, result in what voice-over researchers refer to as the *illusion of authenticity*—an implicit assurance that what the viewers are being told in their own language is what is being said in the original text. While it is certainly true that, as Díaz-Cintas & Orero observe, voice-over, just like

subtitling, is a type of "overt translation" (Díaz-Cintas & Orero, 2006, p. 477), meaning that the translated text is "always presented and perceived as a translation" (ibid.), this apparent openness, this ever-present "reminder of <…> the need for translation" (ibid.), lies at the very heart of the trust that the consumer of a voiced-over product is encouraged to develop. According to Orero, it is precisely this delay effect, providing the audience with access to glimpses, however brief, of the original soundtrack, "that creates the feeling of reality" (Orero, 2006, p. 175) associated so often with this mode of audiovisual transfer.

While some researchers note a "relative lack of constraints in voice-over" (Grigaravičiūtė & Gottlieb, 1999, p. 43) and thus imply a greater degree of translatability compared to other, more "constrained" modes of audiovisual translation (subtitling included), several case studies have indicated the exact opposite. Woźniak points out that voice-over "is in fact far from being an exact reproduction of the original speech" (Woźniak, 2012, p. 214). On the contrary, it tends "to simplify and reduce the amount of information when compared with the original verbal output" (ibid.), thus increasing "the audibility of the original soundtrack" (Woźniak, 2012, p. 215) and supporting the continued presence of the source text. Indeed, some scholars have found that "voiced-over versions can be even more reduced than the subtitled ones" (Woźniak, 2012, p. 216)—a bold claim and a surprising conclusion, given that, as has been noted above, subtitling is generally associated with an omnipresent edict of brevity and condensation.

As voice-over translation requires the practitioner to condense the original text to quite an extreme extent at times, this often results in the target text being rendered "selective and fragmentary" (Woźniak 2008: 77). Nevertheless, given that the translated utterances are supposed to weave organically into the overarching polysemiotic structure of the original audiovisual product, such fragmentation should not create any difficulties when it comes to the viewers deciphering the meaning behind the audiovisual product they are consuming. This is due to the condensed text being "supplemented with the information available on screen" (ibid.), which facilitates rather than hinders the consumption of the voiced-over utterances.

In addition to the prevalence of "lexical reduction" (Díaz-Cintas & Orero, 2006, p. 478), Díaz-Cintas & Orero identify another constraining factor inherent in the mode of voice-over and tied closely to the multimodal nature of an audiovisual text. Echoing the requirements inherent in subtitling, any possible "linkage between text and image in the original" (ibid.) must be considered

carefully by the translator, who should then resort to "[textual] solutions that, as far as possible, <…> recreate the link between the two dimensions at the same point in the program" (ibid.). When discussing the demands placed on the translator by the voice-over mode in terms of synchronisation, Anna Matamala refers to such phenomena as *action* and *kinetic* synchronies (Matamala, 2020, p. 135). Action synchrony dictates that the resulting translation "must be synchronized with the images on screen" (ibid.) at all times. Kinetic synchrony, in its turn, is concerned exclusively with the bodily movements of the characters on the screen. Such demands may certainly pose translational challenges of their own, potentially forcing the translator "to alter the order of the sentences, rephrase the original content or delete some elements" (ibid.). The translator of audiovisual content must thus remain acutely aware of what is being presented on screen, as well as of how these images are linked to the relevant dialogic utterances, ensuring that the visual, verbal and aural elements are all tied seamlessly together.

By way of conclusion, it can be claimed that, while the subtitling and the voice-over modes operate largely within different semiotic channels, with the former resulting in the construction of a written text and the latter producing a new soundtrack, the key translational resistances that the two techniques encounter are of a similar nature. In addition to the purely linguistic challenges that any interlingual translation must contend with, there are the issues of text condensation and the requirements of synchronisation posed by the polysemiotic nature of the audiovisual text. A close analysis of the film *Crash* (1996) by David Cronenberg (based on J. G. Ballard's novel under the same name, first published in 1973), as well as of its translations into Lithuanian in the modes of voice-over and subtitling, may help uncover more translational resistances involved in the rendering of an audiovisual product, as well as aid in revealing the inner workings of the interpretative procedures that any translation necessarily calls for.

5. "A PLAYING FIELD WHERE MULTIPLE MEANINGS CRASH"[1]: J. G. BALLARD'S *CRASH* FROM JEAN BAUDRILLARD TO DAVID CRONENBERG

Born on 15 November 1930 in Shanghai, China, where his father owned a profitable textile factory, James Graham Ballard was set to become one of the quintessential figures of the British avant-garde and science fiction scenes. His future career path, however, was not immediately clear to Ballard's family, nor was it obvious for the writer-to-be himself. Referring to his real-life persona later on as "a man of complete and serene ordinariness" (Pringle, 2009), the author enjoyed a comfortable, prosperous upper middle-class existence as a British expatriate in China, "tended by Chinese servants and Russian governesses" (ibid.). This continued up until December of 1941 when, following the attack on Pearl Harbour, the Japanese army entered the calm and quiet of the International Settlement that the Ballards had been calling home. After a year of uneasiness and tension, all "enemy civilians" (ibid.) were ultimately moved from their homes to isolated camps around Shanghai. This group included the Ballard family, who were confined to the Lunghua civilian assembly centre for the two subsequent years. As David Pringle asserts, such an abrupt, unexpected disruption ended up awakening in the then 14-year-old James Graham "a lifelong sensitivity to dislocations, sudden reversals, paradoxes, and ironies" (Pringle, 2009). His experiences in Lunghua subsequently served as an inspiration for one of his best-known novels, *Empire of the Sun* (1984)—a semi-autobiographical work that was shortlisted for the acclaimed Booker Prize.

A few months after the end of World War II, James Graham returned to England, a country that his parents hailed from, yet one that the young boy had never laid his eyes on before. After finishing school, he read medicine in King's College, Cambridge, for two years—while he left without taking a degree, the brief medical stint undoubtedly left its mark on Ballard's later writing. His scientific aspirations now left behind, Ballard embarked on his new-found passion for writing. After another short-lived attempt at formal education, this time as an English student at the University of London, and a year spent at the RAF as a trainee pilot, Ballard finally composed his first short science fiction story entitled *Passport to Eternity* in 1955 (published in 1962).

[1] Stern, 1996, p. 63.

Falling firmly within the genre of science fiction, Ballard's first lengthier novel, *The Drowned World* (1962), established him as a new, original, highly unconventional voice in the British postmodern literary scene. Throughout the career that followed, the author grappled, lovingly yet uncomfortably at times, with the label of science fiction attached so readily to the majority of his subsequent novels, *Crash* (1973) being no exception. While Ballard praised the genre as "the main literature of the twentieth century" (Ballard, cited in McNay, 2020), "the only fiction to celebrate the possibilities of the future rather than the definition of the past" (ibid.), he also remarked that assigning such a definition to some of his works can be viewed as an attempt at "defusing the threat" (Ballard, cited in Lea and Adetunji, 2009). The label of science fiction may cause the reader to disregard the real-life cultural phenomena expounded on in a piece of literature, dismiss the pertinent questions raised about the functioning of contemporary society, and relegate subversive ideas to the realm of phantasy—mere fiction that has nothing at all to do with reality.

If it can be referred to as science fiction at all, the Ballardian brand of this particular genre is indeed science fiction "with a difference". As Michael McNay observes, "Ballard's stories are strictly about the times we live in" (McNay, 2020). Unlike most science fiction writers, Ballard "never dates a story" and "rarely projects into the future" (ibid.). Rather than inventing an alien world of spaceships, phantasmagorical technologies and fictional monsters, he focuses on the nightmares and dystopias already plaguing the contemporary society—"the evolving world, the world of hidden persuaders, of the communications landscape developing, of mass tourism, of the vast conformist suburbs dominated by television" (Ballard, cited in Lea and Adetunji, 2009). The universe envisioned by Ballard is hence built on a searingly real foundation, capable of reversing the very categories of 'reality' and 'fiction'. In a world where images of the real have conquered that to which they are supposed to refer, "the main task of the arts seems to be more and more to isolate the real elements in this goulash of fictions from the unreal ones" (Ballard, cited in Jones, 1969). Thus, as seen by the writer, literary fiction turns into a conduit for truth, perhaps the only remaining agent capable of translating the endlessly mediated landscapes of contemporary society into all-encompassing myths extrapolated from the remnants of reality still available. If, as Ballard seems to believe, the world can indeed be viewed as a text made up of numerous competing signs and images, then it is the literary text, so adept at sifting through labyrinthine semioses, that could potentially extract a semblance of meaning from the increasingly meaningless, mediated, magnetically fictionalised postmodern existence.

Back in England, Ballard eventually settled in Shepperton, described by Thomas Frick as "a dingy, nondescript suburb of London lying under the approach to Heathrow Airport" (Frick, 1984). For nearly half a century, up until his death in 2009, the author led a quiet, modest, relatively isolated existence. It was, however, his bleak, unimpressive surroundings, the oppressive motorway and the perpetual hum of the neighbouring Heathrow Airport that Ballard ultimately utilised as a source from which the dystopian world of *Crash* was to spring.

While the grey, dull, quintessentially urban reality of Shepperton and the nearby airport served as a prototype for the landscape of the novel explored in this paper, the literary seed that the work has germinated from is to be found in the writer's earlier collection of short stories titled *The Atrocity Exhibition* (1970). Originally composed in 1968, a year before the writer put on a now infamous exhibition of crashed cars at the New Arts Laboratory in London[2], the short story *Crash!* has been referred to by Ballard himself as "the gene from which my novel *Crash* was to spring" (Ballard, 1990). In Chapter 12 of the collection, a mock-scientific study is reported on, exploring the "latent sexual content of the automobile crash" (Ballard, 1990) from a variety of perspectives: the biological signs of sexual arousal observed in the purported participants of the study when presented with video material showing victims of automobile crashes; the "upsurge in <…> sexual activity" (Ballard, 1990) detected in the behaviour of the surviving relatives of auto-crash victims; the highly excited demeanour of those witnessing a crash on the road; even the choices made by the subjects when asked to devise "the optimum auto crash victim" (Ballard, 1990), "the optimum auto disaster" and "the optimum wound profile" (ibid.). Having collected and categorised this catalogue of "polyperverse obsessions" (ibid.) displayed by the participants, the authors of the fictional study ultimately conclude the following:

> It is clear that the car crash is seen as a fertilizing rather than a destructive experience, a liberation of sexual and machine libido, mediating the sexuality of those who have died with an erotic intensity impossible in any other form. (Ballard, 1990)

[2] Bearing the ironically straightforward title of *Crashed Cars*, and with the poster for the event describing the objects on display as "new sculpture", the exhibition included several mangled vehicles presented without commentary. The opening party was joined by a half-naked woman interviewing people on closed-circuit TV. Viewing the exhibition as a type of psychological experiment (ibid.), Ballard set out to see how the attendees would behave when faced with such an atrocity exhibition of the writer's making. The opening party descended into chaos, with "[w]ine <…> poured over the crashed cars, glasses <…> broken, the topless girl <…> nearly raped in the back seat" (ibid.), while over the course of one month during which the vehicles were on show, numerous acts of vandalism occurred, thus demonstrating the highly complex, contradictory effect that the crashed cars had on the visitors.

This shockingly dystopian vision, presented by Ballard in an uncomfortably detached, dispassionate, abstracted language of science, contains in it the main elements of the novel published three years after *The Atrocity Exhibition*. Andrew D. Bowyer describes *Crash* as a text wherein "techno-eroticism meets the sterility of an autopsy report" (Bowyer, 2020, p. 314), emphasising the ever-present clash that suffuses the novel between the highly sexual, even pornographic content and the desexualised, nightmarishly methodical vocabulary used to describe it. It was, of course, the content rather than the style of Ballard's *Crash* that sparked outrage upon the novel's publication. The label of pornography[3] was virtually inescapable, causing the work to attract largely poor reviews in the British press.

According to Bowyer, while the author "took some satisfaction in the outrage generated by *Crash*", perceiving it as proof that "unpalatable truths had been drawn up from the deep" (Bowyer, 2020, p. 314) by the controversial subject matter of the novel, Ballard was not quite as comfortable with the label of science fiction, affixed so readily to *Crash* upon its publication, as he was with the stamp of pornographic literature. In an interview taken in 1974, the writer stated:

> *Crash* is not a science fiction novel <…>. I wouldn't want a reader tackling *Crash* to let himself be fenced in by the limitations (which don't, however, necessarily imply a pejorative judgment) that are habitually attributed to science fiction.

To preserve its conceptual force and maintain its inherent multiplicity of meaning, the novel discussed herein, suffused as it is with "an interpretive and experiential ambiguity" (Kavanagh, 2019, p. 457), should be allowed to defy definite categorisation. While its subject matter is unquestionably pornographic at times, the language used to describe even the most radical of sex acts could hardly be less so. Similarly, despite drawing the readers into a world of dystopian technologies and landscapes reminiscent of the genre of science fiction, *Crash* does not invent a new reality or focus its gaze upon the future, but rather remains anchored firmly to the present and draws its nightmarish visions from the cultural wasteland already in existence.

Indeed, as this paper purports to demonstrate, Ballard's most infamous novel is concerned with signification much more than with sex or science fiction. Such fundamentally semiotic concerns as the nature of a sign, the processes involved in the production of a particular meaning,

[3] The author readily accepted this generic designation, referring to *Crash* as "the first pornographic novel based on technology" and praising pornography as "the most political form of fiction, dealing with how we use and exploit each other in the most urgent and ruthless way" (Ballard, 1974).

the unfettered readability and translatability of the postmodern, endlessly mediated world lie at the very core of *Crash*. It is the hypothesis of the author of the thesis at hand that a semiotic reading of the novel contributes to a richer understanding of both the work in question and the complex meaning-making mechanisms that the field of semiotics explores.

Prior to the examination of the semiotic aspects of the novel, a brief introduction to the narrative is required. The plot of *Crash* follows James Ballard—a character who, curiously, shares his name with the author of the novel, further merging reality and fictionality. Although punctuated by a number of sexual exploits involving other people, the open marriage between James and his wife Catherine remains dull and uninspiring. The lives of the couple are shaken, however, by a sudden car crash: while driving home from work, the man rams into a vehicle carrying Helen Remington and her husband, with the latter being instantly and violently killed. It is this accident, spurred on later by James's meeting with the now-widowed Helen, as well as his encounter with the crash-obsessed Robert Vaughan, that shifts the way in which he reads the world around him. Technology fuses with sexuality, scars turn into signs waiting to be interpreted, the human and the vehicular get inextricably intertwined. As he delves deeper into his new-found obsessions, James becomes tangled up in an ever-expanding web of car crash enthusiasts, deviant sexual escapades, and accidents of Hollywood legends recreated as thrilling real-life performances.

The new world that Ballard-the-character is thrust into after his accident is very literally being *read* by the narrator, much more so than it is being *experienced*. There are numerous references to reading, language, signs, codes and even translation scattered throughout the text. After his crash, the firemen reach towards James "in a series of coded gestures" (Ballard, 2014, p. 14). As he lies in the hospital bed afterwards, the man is sure that his wife can "read the answer to her unspoken questions [about the accident] in the scars on my legs and chest" (Ballard, 2014, p. 18). When contemplating his relationship with Catherine and recalling her sexual fixations, Ballard refers to the fantasies of his wife as "a language in search of objects" (Ballard, 2014, p. 24). The "scratches and heel-marks, cigarette burns and scuffings" in the car James later hires are "translated through the glamorous dimension of Detroit design" (Ballard, 2014, p. 45). Even "the trio of airport whores", observed by him as he drives home from work one evening, seems to "form a basic sexual unit" (Ballard, 2014, p. 46), thus calling the structure of a syntactic unit, i.e., a sentence, to mind and emphasising the curiously linguistic logic at play in the brain of the novel's

narrator. The very fabric of James's surroundings is suffused with endless referentiality, with one sign or event always referring to another, being translated through and transformed by it, hence forming chains of signifiers, series of meaningful signs—such as "a long series of previous concussions" (Ballard, 2014, p. 69) stretching across the career of Seagrave, Vaughan's loyal comrade and go-to stuntman, or "a series of rapidly consumed affairs" (Ballard, 2014, p. 96) that Helen Remington engages in after the death of her husband. The "perverse possibilities" (Ballard, 2014, p. 145) imagined again and again by the fictional Ballard hence refer not so much to deviant sexuality as they do to the significatory potential of a world and a humanity ripe for a different kind of reading.

A concern with language necessarily entails a preoccupation with meaning. If a sign, whether linguistic, technological or bodily, is readable, interpretable and translatable, this suggests that it must be—or must consequently become—meaningful as well. The semiotic bent in the subject matter of *Crash* thus results in numerous references to meaning and significance, with the protagonist endlessly multiplying and expanding the significatory possibilities of his surroundings. The "true significance of the automobile crash, the meaning of whiplash injuries and roll-over" (Ballard, 2014, p. 3) are wistfully mused upon by Ballard at the beginning of the novel. These musings echo throughout the book: for instance, the spectators of a tragic accident look on the site of the crash "as if they all realized the full significance of the displacement of the limousine's radiator grille, the distortion of the taxi's body frame, the patterns of frosting on its shattered windshield" (Ballard, 2014, p. 127).

Curiously, and fittingly for the purposes of this thesis, it is the process of translation that ultimately allows the Ballard of the novel to attain the meaning that he is after, to engage with the multiplication and perpetual renewal that all meaning-making processes require. As the climax of the novel, signified by the sexual union between Ballard and Vaughan, draws closer and the singular language of car crashes becomes increasingly more readable, the narrator comes to accept that "the translation of these injuries [of car crash victims observed by Ballard and Vaughan on their nightly outings] in terms of our fantasies and sexual behaviour was the only means of re-invigorating these wounded and dying victims" (Ballard, 2014, p. 157). The sentiment is once again repeated as the two men embrace for the first time in an abandoned salvage yard. Consider:

> In the breaker's yard a testudo of abandoned cars lay together in the ever-changing light, their outlines shifting as if some time-wind were blowing across them. <…> The spurs of deformed metal,

> the triangles of fractured glass, were signals that had lain unread for years in this shabby grass, ciphers translated by Vaughan and myself as we sat with our arms around each other in the centre of the electric storm moving across our retinas. (Ballard, 2014, pp. 164-165)

To unleash the significance buried inside them, to join into the vast process of signification, and to acquire new meanings along the way, signs must necessarily be translated into a set of other signs. It is only through reading, interpreting and translating that the complex "ciphers" referred to by the narrator can hope to obtain their referents. Recalling the structure of the semiotic triangle discussed in the theoretical section of this paper, it can be claimed that the logic pervading Ballard's dystopian novel is indeed the logic of semiotics.

In his paper titled *Ballard's Crash-Body* (2000), Paul Youngquist dissects the nature of the semiotic system that functions as the foundation for *Crash*. Describing the world of the novel as "a surface without depth" (Youngquist, 2000), the scholar argues the following:

> As a result [of the lack of depth], things lose substance. Boundaries lapse and features merge. Where difference once distinguished, contiguity now associates, deferring the substantive identity of things. Where a boundary once ruled, as between humanity and machine, a blur now occurs, creating unprecedented relations and new possibilities. (Youngquist, 2000)

Such substantive flattening, the semiotic merging of the human and the vehicular, is achieved primarily through careful choice of vocabulary. Time and time again, the same words are used to describe people and pieces of technology, placing these pervasive repetitions in close proximity to one another for even greater emphasis. There is "the mouth of a concealed access road" (Ballard, 2014, p. 3) and the "scarred mouth" of Vaughan (ibid.); a nurse "steering her sponge" (Ballard, 2014, p. 27) around Ballard's bandage is echoed by the mention of "the rake of the steering column" (ibid.); the "body" (Ballard, 2014, p. 51) of an imaginary driver crushed to death in the driving cabin of a truck becomes virtually indistinguishable from the "body panels" (Ballard, 2014, p. 52) of the narrator's crashed car. The human element is consistently dehumanised, this humanity seemingly subsumed by the surrounding technological landscape. The deck of the flyover is seen "straddling the airport entrance tunnel" (Ballard, 2014, p. 56), while the sound of a jet-liner passing overhead is described as a scream (Ballard, 2014, p. 59). Conversely, female breasts are referred to as "soft technology" (Ballard, 2014, p. 23). The most intimate of sexual acts, as well as the sexual organs involved in them, are reported in terms reminiscent of an anatomical textbook or a user manual rather than of an erotic novel. Expressions like *sphincter*, *pubis*, *perineum* and *vaginal mucus* serve to disembody, desexualise and render abstract the human bodies that populate the pages of *Crash*. By reading the sexual as the technological and by infusing technology with

sexuality, the novel ultimately divests the body of its organic qualities and reconstitutes it as a mere semiotic function, dutifully performing the role assigned to it by the novel's significatory system.

While the human body as a whole functions as a sign in *Crash*, it is itself inscribed with other signs, i.e., the scars and wounds born by the surviving victims of car crashes. Resulting in what Panayiota Chrysochou has termed "wound-as-sign" (Chrysochou, 2009), a shift in the protagonist's perception of a scar is engendered as a consequence of the car crash that James Ballard of the novel gets involved in at the beginning of the book. After crashing into the vehicle of Helen and her husband, with the latter being hurled through the window of his car and killed instantly, Ballard observes the following:

> Her husband's hand, no more than a few inches from me, lay palm upwards beside the right windshield wiper. His hand had struck some rigid object as he was hurled from his seat, and the pattern of a sign formed itself as I sat there <…> - the triton signature of my radiator emblem. (Ballard, 2014, p. 12)

In the mind of the narrator, the real, physical scar on the dead man's body is instantly conceptualised as a sign, an inscription bearing witness to the encounter of a living human body with the artificial surface of the car. As the novel progresses, along with the semiotic obsession of its protagonist, so does the continuous multiplication of these sign-like scars, rendering the variously injured characters of the book readable and identifiable. For instance, when James Ballard encounters Vaughan for the first time, it is "the scar tissue around his forehead and mouth" (Ballard, 2014, p. 31) that marks him out. Similarly, Helen is identified with the help of "the bruise marking her right cheekbone" and "the scar tissue on her face" (ibid.). After a violent sexual act involving Vaughan and Ballard's wife, it is the wounds on her body that allow Catherine to be read anew, with "the weals on her cheek and neck", the woman's "bruised mouth" marking out "the elements of her real beauty" (Ballard, 2014, p. 136). As Chrysochou maintains, these bodily markers ultimately obtain "their own internal, linguistic code" (Chrysochou, 2009). By acquiring the function of potent "erotic signifiers" (ibid.), wounds-as-signs are "disseminated along the semiotic system like a signature, infinitely reproducible" (ibid.). The wounds are, in effect, the bodily translations of the automobile accidents that have caused them to come into being, the markings of the powerful connection between humans and machines. They are *signs*—and, as such, their very existence presupposes a continuous gain in meaning.

At the centre of the novel's semiotic universe lies the car, referred to elsewhere by Ballard-the-author as "the most powerfully advertised commercial product of this century, an iconic entity that combines the elements of speed, power, dream and freedom" (Ballard, 1990). The car is the "sexual signifier" (Chrysochou, 2009) *par excellence*—to quote the novel, it is "the sexual act's greatest and only true locus" (Ballard, 2014, p. 141). As the embodiment of modern technology and the quintessential role that it plays in the everyday lives of the general public, the image of the car transforms the way in which its human occupants are read. If the bodies in *Crash* are devoid of organicity, it is the ever-present car-as-sign that renders them so. In his paper, Youngquist states the following:

> Built for the average buyer, the interior of the car (mass) produces a conceptual body assimilable to the material geometry of instrument panel and steering wheel. The condition of such a body's agency becomes the automobile itself. (Youngquist, 2000)

Thus, the bodies populating the novel are as mass-produced as the vehicles that fill its pages. It is this equivalence, placing both the body and the machine on an equal semiotic footing, which allows for the emergence of a sexuality that "as easily embraces an automobile as a lover" (ibid.). In the world constructed by Ballard, where everything functions as a sign, where differences are abstracted into nothingness, and where any kind of reading seems perfectly plausible, there can be no real, material distinction between the human and the technological, the living and the inanimate. Sex consequently turns into a series of abstracted interactions. While *Crash* may indeed praise the car as "the sexual act's <…> true locus" (Ballard, 2014, p. 141), it can be argued, following the insights of Youngquist, that this act is, in fact, semiotic rather than sexual.

As pervasive as the numerous signs suffusing the novel are various forms of media, resulting in the book's entire world being morphed into a series of representations, reproductions, simulations, copies, images and reflections. The main characters, Ballard and Vaughan, are associated closely with the world of media through their present or past careers, with the former working at a film studio and engaged in the production of advertisements (including car commercials), and the latter having once been "one of the first of the new-style TV scientists" (Ballard, 2014, p. 48), whose image used to be "projected from a dozen <…> television programmes and news-magazine profiles" (ibid.). Although no longer involved in television, Vaughan has turned into an amateur photographer, tirelessly reproducing his surroundings via the mediating gaze of a camera lens. During his first few encounters with Ballard, the former TV

personality is seen haunting the margins of the narrative as a nameless "man with a camera" (Ballard, 2014, p. 48), encircled at all times by photographic equipment—"cameras, a tripod, a carton packed with flashbulbs <…> cine-camera <…> fastened to a dashboard clamp" (ibid.). Citing a gruesome motorcycle accident as the reason behind the abrupt end of Vaughan's TV career, the narrator of the novel notes that in their current state, the man's features look as if they have been "reassembled after the crash from a collection of faded publicity photographs" (Ballard, 2014, p. 49), hence further merging Vaughan's identity with the photographic image. To advance this point, Ballard later remarks on the fading images of Vaughan covering the walls of his apartment: "photographs of himself, stills from his television programmes, half-plate prints from newspaper photographers, polaroid snapshots of himself on location" (Ballard, 2014, p. 138). Vaughan seems to cling desperately onto these representations of his former persona, "as if frightened that when they finally vanished, his own identity would also cease to matter" (ibid.). As Youngquist puts it, the character of Robert Vaughan is effectively "defined by the technologies of photography that condition his perception" (Youngquist, 2000), as well as the representation of his own self. As the novel progresses, it becomes increasingly clear that the camera and the images it produces are, in a sense, "the condition of all that Vaughan does and is" (Youngquist, 2000), turning the man itself into an image.

Vaughan is not the only one to be subsumed so deeply into the world of media—the same applies to every other character operating within the novel. Images, whether appearing in the form of films, advertisements, magazines, photographs, prints or even simulated car crashes, are virtually inescapable. There are "television newsreels" (Ballard, 2014, p. 26), "pages of news magazines" (ibid.), "billboard harangues and television films of imaginary accidents" (Ballard, 2014, p. 27), discussions about "the state of the film industry <…> and the commercial feature-film" (ibid.), "darkened cinemas" (Ballard, 2014, p. 34), "a holiday route map, <…> a trade magazine" (Ballard, 2014, p. 39), "photographs of famine victims in the Philippines" (Ballard, 2014, p. 42) reprinted in a copy of *Paris-Match*, etc. This vast, mediated field ends up seeping into the very body of its human inhabitants, claiming the people living inside for itself, as evidenced by James's musings while driving a rented car used earlier on by a TV company and still covered with various markings of "imaginary dramas <…> actors playing the roles of detectives and petty criminals, secret agents and absconding heiresses" (Ballard, 2014, p. 45). Consider:

> As I moved in the evening traffic along Western Avenue, I thought of being killed within this huge accumulation of fictions, finding my body marked with the imprint of a hundred television crime serials, the signatures of forgotten dramas which, years after being shelved in a network shake-up, would leave their last credit-lines in my skin. (ibid.)

The world that the characters of *Crash* inhabit is indeed a "huge accumulation of fictions", ruled by the images that have replaced their original referents—and in this world-as-fiction, the image of celebrity reigns supreme. As the quintessential fiction of this mediated landscape, turning the individual identity of a living human being into an image on the screen, the realm of celebrity is an exalted domain, seemingly the only space that still deserves a measure of quasi-religious reverence. Nowhere is this as apparent as in Vaughan's all-consuming obsession with famous car crashes that have taken the lives of iconic cultural figures, such as James Dean, Albert Camus, Jayne Mansfield and John F. Kennedy amongst others. In his mind, celebrities, whether living or dead, become the epitome of sexuality. Married to the concept of a car crash, their real or imaginary deaths acquire a similar sexual status. Taking part in a "sex-death" (Ballard, 2014, p. 151) of this nature is Vaughan's ultimate sexual fantasy, and he selects the actress Elizabeth Taylor as the principal object of his obsession. Throughout the novel, the man is consumed with planning out the smallest details of their first, and final, encounter: the "grotesque wounds" (Ballard, 2014, p. 1) that the actress would suffer, his own "actions and postures" (Ballard, 2014, p. 150) behind the wheel, all of the manifold "elements of a conceptual sexual act involving the actress and the route she would take from the studios at Shepperton" (Ballard, 2014, p. 142), where the James Ballard of the novel works. It is as if the death of a celebrity is alone capable of divorcing the image, the abstracted sign of the person behind the cultural figure, once and for all from its real-life referent, relegating it fully to the semiotic system and rendering it available for public consumption. As the narrator puts it, the automobile crash ultimately allows for "the final and longed-for union of the actress and the members of her audience" (Ballard, 2014, p. 156). Hence, it is not Elizabeth Taylor herself that Vaughan is obsessed with, made evident by his paralysing disappointment after finding out that Seagrave, the loyal stuntman, has died in a car crash while dressed as the actress. From that point onwards, for Vaughan, "the film actress had already died" (Ballard, 2014, p. 154). There is no separation, no difference between the mimicked image and the real-life woman, the signifier and the signified.

Curiously, in *Crash*, automobile accidents produce their own kind of celebrity. The general public's morbid curiosity turns car crashes into a stage, while their intoxicating realness cultivates

a feeling akin to religious devotion. Nothing else in the novel is described in terms as romanticised and exalted as those reserved for the portrayals of crashes and their victims. After the accident involving Helen and her husband, the woman's face is described by the narrator as being marked by "the blank and unresponsive look of a madonna in an early Renaissance icon, unwilling to accept the miracle <…> sprung from her loins" (Ballard, 2014, p. 12). As the scene of a car crash is recreated in one of the commercials that Ballard is directing, the actress sits "in the damaged car like a deity occupying a shrine readied for her in the blood of a minor member of her congregation" (Ballard, 2014, p. 87). Meanwhile, Seagrave's dead body is "dressed in its coronation armour of fractured glass" (Ballard, 2014, p. 153), and a fragment cut by Vaughan from the front seat of Seagrave's Mercedes is lying between him and Ballard "like a saintly relic" (Ballard, 2014, p. 154). In the context of an automobile accident, even a pool of Catherine's vomit becomes an object to be marvelled at, "with its clots of blood like liquid rubies" (Ballard, 2014, p. 8), a "magic pool, lifting from her throat like a rare discharge of fluid from the mouth of a remote and mysterious shrine" (Ballard, 2014, p. 9), "as refined as the excrement of a fairy queen" (ibid.).

It is no wonder then that this "bloody eucharist" (Ballard, 2014, p. 129) draws crowds of spectators towards the site of an accident. A car crash is, after all, a performance, offering up its own unique mixture of abstracted fictions and concrete bodily realities. After ramming into the vehicle carrying the Remingtons, the James Ballard of the novel is overtaken by a feeling that the participants of the crash, himself included, are "the principal actors at the climax of some grim drama in an unrehearsed theatre of technology" (Ballard, 2014, p. 13). The presence of numerous theatregoers, "hundreds of drivers waiting beside the stage with their headlamps blazing" (ibid.), hence seems only natural. There are always "faces pressed at the windows of the cars" (Ballard, 2014, p. 127) passing an accident site. There are children relishing the performance, "many lifted on their parents' shoulders to give them a better view" (ibid.). A car crash is a collective experience, the private realities of its participants having been rendered public, their bodies having been laid bare, their personhood having been transformed into signhood, allowing the spectators to engage in a shared fantasy for a while, then leave the site "as if <…> members of a congregation <…> after a sermon" (Ballard, 2014, p. 129). The religious vocabulary that is used consistently to describe the accidents heightens their status as a unifying ritual, a sacred rite that is alone capable of interrupting the daily monotony and dreariness of the postmodern existence with its promise of

catharsis, the latter being equally characteristic of both theatrical performances and religious ceremonies.

The semiotic complexities of the world portrayed by Ballard-the-author are brought into sharper focus by considering the book from the perspective of Jean Baudrillard, a prominent French philosopher, sociologist and media theorist. As Sean McQueen observes, Ballard and Baudrillard seem to form an established "dyad" (McQueen, 2013) in the sphere of literary criticism, spurred on by the "numerous points of exchange <…> between them" (Noys, cited in McQueen, 2013). Perhaps the most notable of such exchanges is Baudrillard's controversial essay on *Crash*, first published in 1976 under the title of *Ballard's Crash* and subsequently reprinted in *Simulacra and Simulation* (1981). In it, the philosopher famously endows Ballard's text with the title of "the first great novel of the universe of simulation" (Baudrillard, 1994, p. 116). In order to develop an understanding of this statement, however, the concepts of simulation, simulacra and hyperreality should first be considered.

When discussing the concept of a simulacrum, William Merrin states the following:

> The simulacrum is not a new idea but an ancient concept <...> centring upon the image and its efficacy. The image has always been conceived of as powerful, as possessing a remarkable hold over the hearts and minds of humanity – as having the capacity to assume for us the force of that which it represents, threatening in the process the very distinction of original and image. <...> however, <...> it [the image] retains a threat – a nihilistic power to unground all foundations for truth and falsity and to overturn the ontological and epistemological traditions upon which the West's history has been built. (Merrin, 2001, p. 88)

This is the kind of world that Baudrillard envisions in his theoretical musings—a world ruled by images and representations, a place where signs of the real (simulacra) are convincing enough to usurp that which is, or has once been, the real. The prevalence of electronic media, designed to mimic, and even replace, reality, transforms the postmodern landscape into the domain of a warped neo-reality, a space wherein the constructed image reigns supreme. The world itself is hence translated into signs and consumed as such. In the Baudrillardian conception of postmodern reality, the inherent translatability of a semiotic sign gets unchained, unmoored, and let loose. Everything can be translated into anything else, causing the destructive, de-realising effects of such unlimited translatability to come to the surface. By "immediately materializing the real and abolishing it in its hyperrealization" (Baudrillard, 1996, p. 25), the postmodern man eventually loses sight of the real altogether.

The potential power of simulacra, or images, to replace their real-life referents, the conception of the postmodern landscape as being ruled by such representations, the influence of mass media, and the hyperreality that this endless simulation ultimately results in are thus the key tenets in Baudrillard's oeuvre. It is important to stress in the context of this thesis that, with its continued emphasis on signs and sign systems, the interpretation of postmodernity put forward by Baudrillard is intrinsically semiotic. The media, as it is viewed by the theoretician, functions as an all-encompassing machine of sign production—precisely *sign*, as opposed to *meaning*. In *Simulacra and Simulation*, Baudrillard draws a sharp distinction between the two. According to him, it is not meaning that media multiplies, but rather information. One of the hypotheses that he puts forth states that "information is directly destructive of meaning and signification" (Baudrillard, 1994, p. 79). The loss of meaning observed in the endlessly mediated postmodern landscape may very well be "directly linked to the dissolving, dissuasive action of information, the media, and the mass media" (ibid.). Instead of actively producing meaning, media exhausts it by engaging incessantly in "the staging of meaning" (Baudrillard, 1994, p. 80) and presenting mere *re*productions of the original referents. While the abundance of signs that this process results in may give an impression of "an accelerated circulation of meaning" (Baudrillard, 1994, p. 79), the signs so produced are indeed mere images, fascinating in their realness, yet devoid of content. In other words, these signs are simulacra—and simulacra make up the foundation for the Baudrillardian concept of simulation, or hyperreality. In the universe of the hyperreal, what used to be real-life referents that these signs represented have been replaced "with their artificial resurrection in the systems of signs, a material more malleable than meaning, in that it lends itself to all systems of equivalences, to all binary oppositions, to all combinatory algebra" (Baudrillard, 1994, p. 2). It is precisely such a universe that the characters of *Crash* live in—a universe ruled and endlessly multiplied by, as Baudrillard puts it, "pure inscription of <…> empty signs" (Baudrillard, 1994, p. 110).

By referring to the perverse logic of the novel as "a semiotics without meaning" (Youngquist, 2000) and thus divorcing the latter concept from that of a sign, Youngquist adopts an intrinsically Baudrillardian approach, which makes his paper worthwhile to return to in this section of the thesis. Taking the arguments presented by Baudrillard in *Ballard's Crash* as a starting point, the scholar develops an intriguing theory about the inner workings of sexuality in Ballard's novel. Consider the following excerpt from Baudrillard's essay:

> Sex as we know it is nothing but a minute and specialized definition of all the symbolic and sacrificial practices to which a body can open itself, no longer through nature, but through artifice, through the simulacrum, through the accident. <…> it is no longer sex, it is something else, sex, itself, is nothing but the inscription of a privileged signifier and some secondary marks - nothing next to the exchange of all the signs and wounds of which the body is capable. (Baudrillard, 1994, p. 112)

As it is viewed and represented in the novel, sex is itself a simulacrum, a sign in a system that has seemingly freed itself from the need of any privileged signifiers, any pre-established referents, any pre-existing meanings. Given this new-found freedom, it should presumably go on to create new meanings of its own, translating the human body into a source of pleasures that have previously lain dormant. However, as Youngquist argues, the sexuality portrayed by Ballard "serves the purpose not of representation [of a certain meaning] but of dissemination" (Youngquist, 2000). Rather than engaging in desire, it "reproduces signs of desire" (ibid.). If sexuality of this nature represents anything outside of itself at all, it is the inner workings of mass media as described by Baudrillard. In his paper, Youngquist stresses that the "semiotic system that disseminates sexuality <…> includes billboards, TV shows, magazines, movies" (ibid). This system "disseminates sex as a set of gestures, postures, behaviors, positions" (ibid.)—or, in other words, signs. Following the example of the media, which "lifts sexuality out of the body and onto a surface determined by a new mimetic logic" (ibid.), the "semio-eroticism" (ibid.) depicted in the book divests sex of all possible meaning and instead transforms it into a set of hollow signatures, "reenactments of the images that pervade the semiotic horizon" (ibid.). The most intimate of exchanges thus passes fully into the realm of simulacra, the Baudrillardian dystopia of the hyperreal, with Ballard demonstrating the extent to which the logic of mass media can infiltrate the inner workings of human relationships and interactions.

In Baudrillard's essay, the hyperreality of the discussed novel ultimately leads the theoretician to question the generic label of science fiction, which, as has been mentioned previously in the thesis, is regularly assigned to it. Unlike most works of science fiction, which tend to distinguish reality from fictionality and emphasise the difference between the two, the text composed by Ballard allows itself no such clear-cut distinctions. In it, "there is no more fiction or reality, it is hyperreality that abolishes both" (Baudrillard, 1994, p. 116). Therefore, *Crash* rejects the categories of both fact and fiction. While fantastical in its excesses, the world depicted in the novel is, at the same time, "more real than the real" (Baudrillard, 1994, p. 81). It is its own kind of

simulacra, exposing the universe of simulation by taking it to the extreme and thus laying its nature bare.

Finally, and perhaps most controversially, Baudrillard argues that in addition to presenting a fascinating portrait of the postmodern realm of hyperreality, the novel can be regarded as an exemplary case of "hypercriticism", with the philosopher using this term to denote a text that is "beyond the critical" (Baudrillard, 1994, p. 116), i.e., that transcends all semblance of a judgmental, morally charged attitude towards its own content. In his essay, he posits the following:

> Not even a critical regression is possible. This mutating and commutating world of simulation and death, this violently sexed world, but one without desire, <...> this chromatic world and metallic intensity, but one void of sensuality, <...> - is it good or bad? We will never know. <...> There lies the miracle of *Crash*. Nowhere does this moral gaze surface <...>. *Crash* is hypercriticism <...>. Few books, few films reach this resolution of all finality or critical negativity, this dull splendor of banality or of violence. (ibid.)

This suggestion of an entirely uncritical stance purportedly adopted by the novel's author drew a slew of criticism against Baudrillard. For instance, in her response titled *Baudrillard's Obscenity* (1991), Vivian Sobchack accused the theoretician of being "celebratory and <…> impassioned" (327) where the author of *Crash* himself "is cautionary and <…> technical" (ibid.). Nowadays, Ballard's attitude towards the content of his novel is still subject to discussion. In the 1974 introduction to the French edition of *Crash*, the writer has famously stated that the ultimate purpose of the novel is indeed "cautionary, a warning against that brutal, erotic realm that beckons more and more persuasively to us from the margins of technological landscapes" (Ballard, 1974). Later, however, he has retracted this statement, proclaiming the following:

> in the final paragraph [of the introduction to the novel's French edition], which I have always regretted, I claimed that in *Crash* there is a moral indictment of the sinister marriage between sex and technology. Of course it isn't anything of the sort. *Crash* is not a cautionary tale. *Crash* is what it appears to be. It is a psychopathic hymn. But it is a psychopathic hymn which has a point. (Ballard, cited in Sellars and O'Hara, 2012, p. 309)

To sum up, perhaps *Crash* is both: as dizzyingly real as it is quintessentially hyperreal, as critical as it is hypercritical, as moral as it is amoral, as unquestionably literary, and consequently untranslatable into the audiovisual language of the cinema, as it is inherently cinematic and endlessly adaptable. While the generic identity and ethical stance of the novel discussed herein may never become permanently fixed, the upcoming subchapter shall attempt to delve deeper into its translatability—and translatability in general—by comparing it to its cinematic adaptation under the same title, directed by David Cronenberg and released in 1996.

5.1. Cronenberg's *Crash*: From the Verbal Code to the Audiovisual Mode

David Cronenberg, the director and scriptwriter behind the on-screen version of Ballard's novel, was born thirteen years later than the writer, on 15 March 1943. Not only did he grow up in times that were quite different from the ones of Ballard's youth, but the surroundings of the young David also bore little resemblance to those that brought up the writer-to-be. Having spent his formative years in Toronto (Ontario, Canada), Cronenberg enjoyed a decidedly middle-class upbringing in an artistically inclined family, with his mother employed as a musician and his father having attained moderate success as a writer and editor. Out of these comfortable circumstances, however, a unique imagination was to arise—the kind that would ultimately lead to the adjective "Cronenbergian" turning into a descriptor frequently encountered in the cinematic field up to this day.

As noted in Encyclopaedia Britannica, Cronenberg is best known for his films combining the "elements of horror and science fiction to vividly explore the disturbing intersections between technology, the human body, and subconscious desire". The director's pervasive focus on the body as a source of horror resulted in the coining of a new term used nowadays to define a distinct generic subcategory of the classic horror film. Known as "body horror", David Cronenberg is universally acknowledged to be the father of the genre. With its bodily terrors, conceptual mutations and radical transformations, Ballard's *Crash* thus offers itself up as an obvious choice for a creator concerned so deeply with, in the words of Linda Kauffman, "anatomy, biology, sexuality, and postmodern postmortems" (Kauffman, 1998).

Another preoccupation that marks Cronenberg out as the right filmmaker to tackle the formidable task of bringing *Crash* to the big screen is his prior experience dealing with cinematic adaptations. Consider the following observation by Mark Browning:

> In the 23-year period between *Videodrome* (1982) and *A History of Violence* (2005), <…> Cronenberg has been repeatedly drawn to basing his films on the literary works of others. He has realized a series of adaptations <…>, including *Naked Lunch* (1991) from William Burroughs' 1959 experimental novel, *Crash* (1996) from J. G. Ballard's 1973 cult text and *Spider* (2003) from Patrick McGrath's dark 1990 account of a mental patient's subjective universe. Even films not ostensibly adaptations draw on previous written material, for example, *Dead Ringers* (1988) derives directly from Jack Geasland and Bari Woods' novel *Twins* (1977). (Browning, 2007)

In addition to the films listed above, there is also *M. Butterfly* (1993), a romantic drama adapted from a stage play by David Henry Hwang under the same title. Cronenberg's literary inclinations are thus evident in the material he selects as the basis for his cinematic texts. Indeed, the director's

enduring affinity for literary fiction has been noted both by multiple film critics. Linda Kauffman, for instance, hails him as "by far the most literate of contemporary filmmakers" (Kauffman, 1998). Reflecting on his love for literature in the 1995 interview with the writer Salman Rushdie, Cronenberg has admitted that while growing up, he always thought of himself as a future novelist. It is perhaps this enduring writerly impulse that has encouraged Cronenberg to serve continuously as both the director and the scriptwriter of his movies.

The novels that Cronenberg tends to be drawn to are anything but safe choices. His decision to adapt *Naked Lunch* by William S. Burroughs serves as an excellent example of the director's penchant for the literary avantgarde. The filmmaker himself has famously stated his desire to "show the unshowable, speak the unspeakable" (Cronenberg, cited in Rodley, 1997, p. 43). Hence, while Ballard's book is hardly typical of any established literary tradition or generic category, it could, in fact, be seen as a curiously typical choice of a source text for a director as intrigued by the untranslatable as David Cronenberg unquestionably is.

After the premiere of Cronenberg's *Crash*, Ballard heaped praise upon the adaptation. In the 1996 public discussion[4] between the filmmaker and the writer, the latter has referred to the film as "a landmark movie, a supremely original piece" (Cronenberg & Ballard, 1996). The cinematic elite seemed to agree. At the 1996 Cannes Film Festival, *Crash* was awarded the Special Jury Prize, while *Les Cahiers du Cinéma* voted the movie as the best film of 1996.

However, when it came to the general public, the reception was far less favourable. The controversy surrounding Cronenberg's movie ultimately led to an unprecedented campaign in the British press, with multiple public figures calling for the film to be banned from the cinemas. The media furore that followed the premiere is analysed at length by Martin Barker, Jane Arthurs and Ramaswami Harindranath in the 2001 study titled *The Crash Controversy: Censorship Campaigns and Film Reception*. Over the course of their investigation, the scholars compiled "some 400 press reports on the film, much radio and television coverage, statements by politicians, and a host of other heated arguments" (Barker, Arthurs & Harindranath, 2001, p. 1), demonstrating the impressive scope of the debate. Alexander Walker, a film critic at *The London Evening Standard*, initiated the campaign by stating that *Crash* contained "some of the most perverted acts and

[4] Available online at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fALlOTzAzM0.

theories of sexual deviance I have ever seen propagated in mainline cinema" (Walker, 1996). Christopher Tookey of the *Daily Mail* followed his lead by proclaiming that the film promulgates "the morality of the satyr, the nymphomaniac, the rapist, the pedophile, the danger to society" (Tookey, 1996) and marks "the point at which even a liberal society must draw the line" (ibid.). It was the sex scenes—both their nature and number—that affronted the moral sensibilities of Britain's film critics. For instance, in his review published in the *Telegraph*, Nigel Reynolds made the following assertion:

> The film is morally vacuous, nasty, violent and little more than an excuse to string together one scene after another of sexual intercourse. I totted up 16 of such scenes – on the back seat of cars, on the front seat, in wrecks of cars, in a car wash – before I stopped counting. (Reynolds, 1996)

While the backlash resulted in several local councils banning the film from being screened publicly, it could be argued that, rather than discouraging the general public from watching the movie, the campaign drew more attention to it, peaking the overall interest and consequently contributing to the cult status that Cronenberg's cinematic adaptation ultimately attained.

Despite the controversy surrounding the film, it offers ample opportunity for fruitful and engaging analysis, particularly when it is read alongside its source text. The numerous intersections between the literary and the cinematic, evident in both the book and the movie, provide an intriguing point of departure. The intrinsic literariness of Cronenberg as a filmmaker, as well as his enduring interest in bringing complex works of literary fiction to the screen, have already been discussed above. Likewise, the numerous forms of visual media pervading Ballard's text have been explored in the previous chapter. However, it is worth pointing out that in the novel, cinematic concerns go far beyond a mere presence of objects or products associated with the realm of cinema and other forms of mass media. Rather, the art of film lies at the very core of Ballard's literary project. In an interview, when asked to elaborate on his tendency to incorporate such specifically cinematic techniques like slow-motion, into his writing, he has provided the following answer:

> Slow motion introduces a different sense of time, a fresh perception of things <…>. It happens in the violent episodes in the films of someone like Sam Peckinpah <…>. A moment of terrifying violence like the collision of two cars hurtling together at full speed can in this way be metamorphosed into a kind of slow and gracious ballet. What interests me in this technique is that while it suppresses the classical emphasis on character, it brings about a stylisation of events which confers on them a formidable weight. (Ballard, 1974)

The writer's musings on this quintessentially cinematic technique hence demonstrate a keen awareness of the audiovisual forms of artistic expression, as well as a clear intent to incorporate

certain cinematic elements into his writing, along with the effects they are capable of producing. For instance, *Crash* the novel contains a lengthy passage describing a crash test replayed on the screen in slow motion, transforming the violent collision into a spectacle marked by "great finesse" (102), grace and elegance. Even more importantly, while engaged in a public discussion with Cronenberg, the writer has readily admitted a conscious effort on his part to make his novels as film-like as possible, remarking, albeit in quintessentially linguistic terms, that in cinema, "the grammar, the language" (Cronenberg & Ballard, 1996) of the twentieth century imagination can be discovered. Similarly, reflecting on the experience of turning Ballard's novel into a film script and echoing the point made by the writer, Cronenberg has commented that the script was surprisingly easy to compose, which can serve as an indication that the novel is indeed inherently cinematic (ibid.).

While Ballard's novel undoubtedly "probes the limits of literary form and language in relation to the <…> media of photography and film" and "engages the question of what it means to translate the visual landscapes of pop—its paintings, its photographs, and particularly its films—into the form of a novel" (Beckman, 2010, p. 167), it still remains grounded firmly within the literary form and is nonetheless concerned primarily with the verbal code. The highly introspective, verbose nature of this source text is bound to pose its own challenges of translatability. It is worth stressing that there is a limited amount of direct speech in the novel, made up as it is primarily of the narrator's internal musings, thus requiring Cronenberg, who has deliberately refused to utilise voice-over narration in his film (Cronenberg & Ballard, 1996), to reshape the original text to a significant extent. The writer's pervasive concern with language and the processes involved in verbal meaning-making, as well as the reliance of the text on unexpected linguistic conjunctions as a means to produce and strengthen the conceptual link between humans and technology, result in another set of translational resistances. A question may then be posed whether a text that transforms its entire world into an accumulation of semiotic functions and deals primarily with the reading that its protagonist gleans from the linguistic signs presented truly be translated into the audiovisual language of film. Is the semiotic dimension of Ballard's book destined to disappear in its cinematic version? To what degree, if at all, is a novel like *Crash* translatable into the language of cinema? It is these questions that shall be focused on in the subsequent paragraphs of the present chapter.

Cronenberg himself has remarked that "all books are unfilmable" (Cronenberg & Ballard, 1996), hence essentially untranslatable. Nevertheless, he has followed this statement up with a considerably more hopeful comment that this is why "you have to reinvent them for the screen" (ibid.), suggesting that the process of reinvention—i.e., of translation—is indeed possible. Nonetheless, as far as reinventions are concerned, Cronenberg's interpretation of Ballard's novel seems, at first glance, to apply them sparingly, preferring to stay as close to the source text as possible. This has led critics like William Beard to conclude that "the film is actually quite faithful to the slim narrative content of Ballard's book" (Beard, cited in Browning, 2007). Similarly, Stuart Laing notes that in the adaptation, "all the main characters retain their structural positions in the plot and patterns of character involvement" (Laing, cited in Browning, 2007). Iain Sinclair echoes these statements by maintaining that the strategy adopted by Cronenberg when composing his script is, in fact, straightforward: "rely on memory, retype the novel, strip out the Elizabeth Taylor element, the London particulars, and nudge the sexual polarity back towards James and Catherine Ballard" (Sinclair, cited in Browning, 2007).

While the truth may not be quite as simplistic as the above critics believe, it may indeed be argued that the majority of changes made by the director during the adaptation process are of a cosmetic, rather than transformative, nature. In terms of the original narrative, "superfluous plot details <…>, such as details of Helen's husband's job and Catherine's flying lessons and peripheral characters" (Browning, 2007), are all omitted by the adapter in an effort to condense the literary source text. As Browning notes, Cronenberg reduces the number of repetitions found in Ballard's novel, presumably with the same objective of condensation in mind. For instance,

> [i]n Ballard's novel, both Catherine in the showroom scene and later Helen whilst being driven by James, recognize that he has bought exactly the same car. Cronenberg [uses] the second example only, allowing him to save the showroom scene for Gabrielle later. (Browning, 2007)

Other notable omissions include the drug-induced visions that the Ballard of the novel experiences towards the end of the book, as well as the character of Elizabeth Taylor, who features prominently in the source text as the focus of Vaughan's escalating obsession. It should be noted that there are additions made to the plot of the movie as well and, though less numerous, these can be said to hold more significance than the details omitted. The additional elements of the film narrative shall be explored more closely below.

Regarding the relative lack of direct speech in the novel, the solution adopted by Cronenberg is rather clear-cut: as Browning puts it, this involves transporting "passages of James' stream of consciousness straight into dialogue" (ibid.). To illustrate, one of such instances appears at the beginning of the film. In the scene, Ballard, lying in a hospital bed after his crash and discussing the experience with his wife Catherine, proclaims that "after being bombarded endlessly by road-safety propaganda, it's almost a relief to find myself in an actual accident". This is lifted almost word-for-word—with the slight change of the past to the present tense—from a passage in the novel that reports the musings of the bed-bound Ballard. In the adaptation, direct transfers of this kind are aided by the highly idiosyncratic nature of the filmic dialogue in Cronenberg's cinematic rendition. The dialogic exchanges are marked by "extreme stylisation" (ibid.), a considerable degree of artificiality, detachment, and emotional flatness. As Browning argues, this is particularly evident in the character of Catherine, whose "minimal gesture and facial reaction, <…> monotone, almost soporific delivery" (ibid.) successfully transports the novel's own emotional dullness onto the screen. In the context of the film, which is marked by tedious, hollow, unnatural exchanges, transporting the highly literary, stylised language of the source text straight to the dialogic lines is undoubtedly the right strategy to be applied.

In his adaptation, Cronenberg also changes the location of the story, shifting its surroundings from the area around Heathrow Airport in London (formerly called London Airport) to the streets of the director's native Toronto. Nevertheless, this alteration may be difficult to spot for a viewer unfamiliar with any of the two cities. While the literary source text is replete with references to the setting of the novel ("the rails of the London Airport flyover", "film studios at Shepperton" (Ballard, 2014, p. 1), "the Road Research Laboratory twenty miles to the west of London" (Ballard, 2014, p. 3), etc.), placing it firmly within a particular geographical context, the film seems to deliberately resist such a strategy. The result is a narrative that is much less context-dependent and hence more universal, creating an impression of events that could be unfolding in any urban area. Not only does this have the effect of shifting the focus away from a certain location and directing it instead towards the philosophical arguments proposed in the film, but it also reflects the nature of cinema as a medium: while a novel, composed originally in a particular language, is necessarily targeted at the readership of a certain nation and often ascribes itself to a (more or less) local literary tradition, a movie, even an avantgarde one, is a product designed for mass consumption, to be screened at multiple cinemas in numerous corners of the globe.

Cronenberg's *Crash* is not aimed at a particular section of the global audience—it is aimed at the world at large. It is worth pointing out, however, that, perhaps as a nod to his native Toronto and due to the car-centric world of the film, the only references to the location of the movie are to be discovered on licence plates and road signs. As the pre-eminent makers of meaning in both the source and the target texts, it is the cars and roads that are alone capable of signifying location and placing the universal, largely decontextualised narrative briefly within a specific space.

It is not only the nature of cinema as a medium designed for more widespread consumption that separates it from literature. The primary difference between the two forms of artistic expression lies in the fact that, while the latter is composed, first and foremost, of verbal signs, the former relies chiefly on the visual code. When analysing the filmic adaptation of a novel bound so closely to the inherently semiotic concerns of linguistic signification, translational processes, reading, and the concept of the world-as-sign, the exploration of the adapter's attitude towards the unique signhood of the film acquires a particular importance.

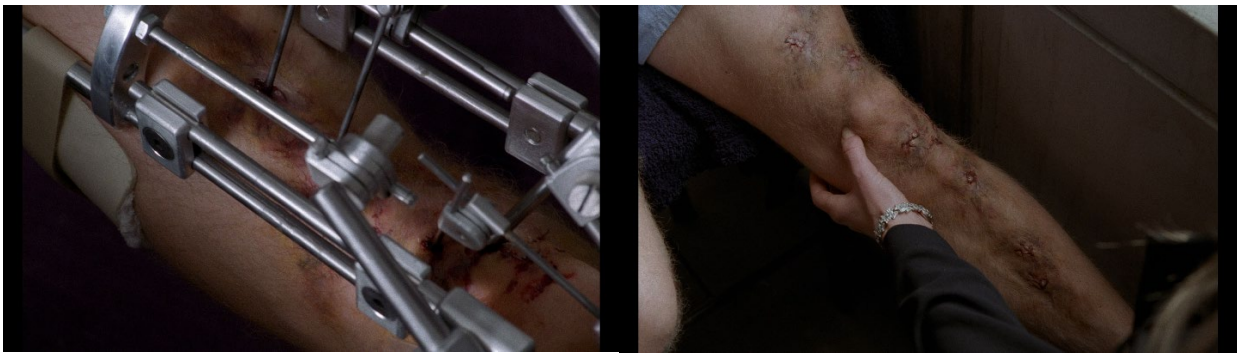
In Ballard's book, the human body, along with its scars, wounds and discharges, is transformed into a text waiting to be read. In addition to the text of the novel itself, the reader is also encouraged to decode the signs inscribed on the bodies of the characters, as well as on the figurative body of the text's fictional world at large. Such readerly complexity is recreated by Cronenberg in his intersemiotic translation by maintaining the novel's focus on signs, yet shifting the nature of these signs from verbal to visual. Following the paradigm of the novel, the motif of a visual imprint is established by the filmmaker in the first several minutes of the movie. After the film's protagonist crashes into the car driven by Helen's husband, sending the man flying through the windows of the two vehicles and straight into the cabin of James's car, a moment of silent shock ensues. Ballard-the-character is looking around dazedly, taking in the aftermath of the incident. Then, in a close-up shot mimicking the protagonist's point of view, the camera focuses on the palm of the dead man: there is a mark left by the emblem of James's car imprinted on it. To solidify the connection, the camera, after turning briefly again to James's face, now looking in a different direction, focuses on the emblem itself in yet another close-up point-of-view shot (see Figure 2).

Figure 2. *The imprint of a car emblem on the palm of the dead man*

Source: Cronenberg, D. (1996). *Crash* [DVD].

As Cronenberg himself has remarked, this is the point in the movie that signifies "the beginning of the whole structure of internal mythology <…>, of the imprinting on the human body by metallic objects, and parts of vehicles" (Cronenberg, 1996). The motif is echoed later on in the film, as seen in Figure 3 below:

Figure 3. *The imprinting of the human body by metallic objects*



Source: Cronenberg, D. (1996). *Crash* [DVD].

Perhaps most intriguing in this context, however, is the scene representing one of the adapter's own unique additions to the plot and supplanting the drug-induced visions experienced by the Ballard of the novel. In the film, the protagonist receives a call: it is Vaughan, asking James to come and see him. In the following scene, Ballard can be seen seated next to Vaughan, who is getting tattooed by a stern-faced woman in a medical attire. While the latter is worried about the tattoo being "too clean", the former seems to be fascinated by the process. Grabbing a stack of papers lying on his lap, Vaughan shuffles through them to find an illustration of the emblem of his own car. He then asks James to let the woman tattoo the emblem on him, to which the protagonist

readily agrees. This is followed by a close-up shot of Vaughan taking the bandage off the tattoo, already marking Ballard's inner thigh. In addition to creating an intriguing parallel between the scar on the dead man's palm at the beginning of the film and the tattooed emblem on James's body, the scene serves to reiterate and strengthen the importance of visual signs in Cronenberg's adaptation. While the novel relies on the verbal code to get its point across, the film emphasises its mythology of signs by showing the two men marking their bodies with tattoos—the modern epitomes of a visual sign as it relates to the human body. Thus, in the process of moving the source text beyond the bounds of the verbal mode and into the medium that incorporates diverse semiotic channels and relies on different codes as its primary meaning-makers, Cronenberg transforms the nature of the text's semiotic preoccupation, yet manages to successfully preserve the preoccupation itself.

The inherently polysemiotic make-up of the cinematic medium shapes new meanings during the process of translation, replacing the novel's extravagant verbosity and linguistic conjunctions with intrinsically visual motifs and filmic themes. The manner in which the close relationship between the human body and the machine is presented in the adaptation provides an intriguing point for analysis of the ways employed to render the novel's key concerns visually. As has been discussed in the previous chapter, Ballard shapes the conjunction between the human and the technological by utilising the same words to describe both elements, hence employing linguistic means to create parallels and resemblances. While Ballard's strategy is decidedly linguistic, Cronenberg's interpretation is primarily visual. The very first scene of the filmic *Crash* already relies on visual similarities to bring machines closer to humans: gliding slowly over the rounded shapes of airplanes in an aircraft hangar, the camera finally reveals Catherine, with her blouse off and her breasts exposed, leaning softly against one of the aircraft. As the camera pans down to focus on Catherine's chest, the voluptuous shape of the woman's body cannot help but call the curves of the airplanes to mind. In a later scene, Vaughan picks up a prostitute to have sex with in the back of the car that James is driving. With the camera swinging slowly and repeatedly from the back seat to the front, a pattern develops: the movements of James's hands, seen caressing the wheel of the car, seem to mimic the motions of Vaughan touching the body of the woman. As a result, the car and the woman end up forming a visual pairing, both being interacted with in a similar manner by the two men. Still later, a large crack on the side of a crashed vehicle anticipates the appearance of the scar seen several minutes onwards on the leg of one of the peripheral crash-

obsessed characters. To emphasise the connection, both the crack and the scar are being touched gently (see Figure 4). It could thus be argued that in scenes like these, separate camera shots perform a function akin to that of words in a sentence, or a set of sentences. By placing such shots in close proximity to one another, Cronenberg achieves an effect that is strikingly similar to the one that Ballard creates via repetitive choice of vocabulary, albeit the filmmaker does this exclusively by visual rather than verbal means.

Figure 4. *The crack on the door of a crashed vehicle and the scar on the leg of a woman*

Source: Cronenberg, D. (1996). *Crash* [DVD].

Another aspect to address in terms of Cronenberg's audiovisual interpretation of Ballard's novel is the manner in which the Baudrillardian concern with images and mass media, as well as the endlessly multiplied and mediated hyperreality of the postmodern landscape, is handled. It is clear from the start that the adaptation questions the reality of the film's surroundings and is highly conscious of the presence of media in them in one form or another. For instance, the film's second scene is described by Browning as follows (see Figure 5):

> [It] appears to position the viewer from within a car looking out, but the 'screen' and its borders are both revealed as an illusion. The fascia of a dashboard is pushed away to reveal that what we had assumed was the frame of the cinematic screen was in fact only the frame of the windscreen. (Browning, 2007)

Figure 5. *The fascia of a dashboard*

Source: Cronenberg, D. (1996). *Crash* [DVD].

With the help of a short, relatively straightforward scene, Cronenberg lays the foundation for the distrust cultivated meticulously in the viewers for the remainder of the film. In a world brimming with representations, reflections and carefully curated images, the spectators can never be sure if what they are presented with is reality or a deliberately constructed illusion. Further emphasising the motif of mass media, the scene in question takes place on a film set. Moreover, amidst his colleagues searching for him, Ballard-the-character is ultimately revealed to be locked in an area labelled "CAMERA ROOM", having sex with a woman later referred to by Catherine as "his camera girl". Such insistent repetition places the viewers firmly within a realm that seems to be conscious of its own simulatedness. As a piece of cinema, the discussed film is necessarily engaged in the creation of images, or simulacra, and by choosing a film set as the location for one of its opening scenes, it allows the viewers to peer into the process involved in such cinematic simulation.

Like the novel, its filmic version is also replete with various forms of media, be it TV sets, magazines or photographs. There is the pornographic magazine, along with the photograph of a half-naked woman—presumably one of James's lovers—lying on the floor of Ballard's crashed car as he scrutinises it for the first time after his accident. There is the TV screen replaying a crash test that the film's characters are eagerly observing. There is Vaughan's "workshop", overlaid with photographs that he has just developed. Even more importantly, there is the very reality that the film's characters inhabit, suffused as it is with the logic of multiplication. Reflections function as a persistent visual motif: from the reflection of Catherine's face on the surface of the airplane in the first scene to numerous instances where, rather than being seen directly, the bleak, urban

surroundings are reflected on the windows or hoods of the cars that the characters are driving or riding in (see Figure 6).

Figure 6. *Reflections on windows and hoods*

Source: Cronenberg, D. (1996). *Crash* [DVD].

The car, as well as the aircraft, is thus presented as its own kind of medium, acting as a filter between the outside world and the occupant of the vehicle, with the car window transformed into a type of screen. Multiplication can also be traced in the frequent wide shots of traffic, where the cars moving endlessly along the highway look like incessant repetitions of each other. The scene wherein Catherine, having just arrived at the location of a recent car crash, sits down beside one of the surviving victims is notable too: in it, the angle of the camera and the positioning of the two women paints Catherine herself as a mere representation, with James's wife assuming the symbolic position of a simulacrum—an image replicating something else (see Figure 7).

Figure 7. *Catherine alongside an injured woman*

Source: Cronenberg, D. (1996). *Crash* [DVD].

Given the presence of various types of media in Cronenberg's movie, as well as the logic of Baudrillardian multiplication it seems to readily adopt, the adaptation can be referred to as a highly self-reflexive film crafted by a director who is aware of the role of the cinematic medium in the all-encompassing simulation that is the postmodern landscape. It presents a translation of the original novel that is nevertheless intent on speaking about the nature of cinematic images even as it adapts a literary text. This is evident in Cronenberg's consistent subversion of generic formulas encountered frequently in the field of cinema. For instance, the elements of pornographic movies that the analysed film is marked by have been subject to a plethora of discussions: from the hostile reception of the adaptation noted above, focused primarily on critiquing the abundance of sex scenes, to the director's own assertion that *Crash* is, in fact, "anti-pornographic" (Cronenberg & Ballard, 1996). On the one hand, the film undoubtedly revolves around sex. The sexual motif is established at the very beginning of the movie, marked as it is by three separate sex scenes: between Catherine and an anonymous man in an aircraft hangar, between James and "his camera girl" in the camera room, and, finally, between Catherine and James themselves. As Browning points out, the first several minutes of Cronenberg's *Crash* "would appear to offer a sensual overload, as we first see sex acts and hear them described afterwards" (Browning, 2007). From the start, sex seems to constitute its own kind of communicative code in the film, with sexual gestures being exchanged freely and unreservedly. In his 1996 interview, the filmmaker has openly admitted that, in a sense, the sex scenes *are* the movie: their sequential nature produces a "sexual language" (Cronenberg & Ballard, 1996) and results in such scenes functioning as narrative devices, indispensable elements of the film's plot, key points of the overall structure. According to

Cronenberg, the "juxtaposition of the sex scenes" (ibid.), the exact sequence in which they are presented, even the presence or the absence of an orgasm at the end of the scene are all part of the story that the film is intent to telling. While such scenes do reproduce the "generic cinematic tropes associated with pornography" (Brottman & Sharrett, 2002, p. 126), they do so deliberately, with the director employing pornographic elements in order to reveal the entire genre of pornography to be a mere "end product of the culture of representation that has dissolved all lived experience through the filters of mediation" (ibid.).

While the characters of *Crash* do engage in a number of sexual acts, the manner in which they are depicted is anything but attractive. More often than not, it is awkward, impersonal, rigid, violent, devoid of pleasure, intimacy or sensuality. During their sexual encounters, the participants are facing away from each other, with the only exception being the sex scene between James and Vaughan. Despite their frequency, these sex scenes lack significance. Unlike pornography, or even sex scenes in romantic movies, Cronenberg's *Crash* does not attempt to heighten the sensuality of what is being shown on screen by supplementing the visuals with an appropriately steamy soundtrack. On the contrary, most sex scenes in the adaptation are not accompanied by background music. This is particularly significant in the car wash scene, praised by Ballard as "an extraordinary combination of all the effects that cinema is capable of, <…> a virtuoso piece of filmmaking" that is characterised by "unparalleled" (Cronenberg & Ballard, 1996) use of sound. As Ballard-the-character steers Vaughan's vehicle into a car wash, Catherine and Vaughan start having sex on the back seat. During the following few minutes, as the two are engaged in a violent sexual act that James observes passively from the front, the only sounds to be heard are the hum of the car windows closing, the whirring of machinery as the vehicle is being washed, the foaming of liquid, the falling of water, and the brushing of body parts against the vehicle's leather seats. While certainly explicit in its visuals, the scene is hence curiously desexualised, stripped of all familiarity and suffused with the metallic indifference of technology. This is not a sex scene that is meant to arouse its viewers. Instead, it is designed to lay the very mechanics of sex bare, to uncover its violent foundations, to make the viewers question rather than enjoy the images on the screen. Just like in Ballard's novel, sexuality in Cronenberg's film takes on the nature of a semiotic function, employed by the director to advance the narrative and unveil a philosophical stance that views sex as "an emblem of chaos and alienation" rather than of "birth and renewal" (Brottman & Sharrett, 2002, p. 131).

Given the fact that the protagonist of the film is involved in the production of automobile advertisements, Cronenberg's adaptation naturally contends with the tropes inherent in the genre of car commercials. Rather than choosing to portray the vehicles as shiny, luxurious, glistening icons gliding effortlessly on polished roads, which is how most television and magazine commercials present them, the film adopts the opposite approach. In her essay *Theory as Style: Adapting* Crash *via Baudrillard and Cronenberg* (2011), Catherine Constable argues that, unlike the novel, which "plays out the imagery of car advertising to the nth degree" (Constable, 2011, p. 149), the film instead engages in "repeated undercutting and displacement of the norms of advertising" (ibid.). While the cars in the book are "manifold, reflective, eroticised" (ibid.), the automobiles in the movie are characterised by "dull upholstery <…> light-absorbing textures and unflattering <…> colour palette" (ibid.). Even in those rare instances where the vehicles seen on the screen are given a more commercialised depiction that portrays them as attractive, inviting, seductive objects, such an image is quickly undermined by their immediate surroundings. Consider:

> Vaughan's introduction to the reconstruction of the James Dean crash in which he drapes himself over the body of the Porsche 550 Spyder race car <…> works to undercut advertising norms: Vaughan is dressed in bulky blue overalls and his scarred, pockmarked face contrasts with the smooth surface of the car. (ibid.)

Similarly, in the scene where James and Gabrielle, a handicapped crash survivor, visit a Mercedes showroom, the glassy surface of a brand-new car that the woman is seductively leaning against is contrasted with "her fishnet-encased, scarred legs" (ibid.). While the characters in the film idolise the car and the sexual promise it seems to hold, worshipping the idealised images of the car commercials, the director seems to resist the temptation. Drawing on the visual tropes that permeate the various forms of contemporary mass media, he seeks to subvert the expectations of the filmgoers. Despite—or perhaps because of—his acute awareness of the manner in which cars are usually presented on the screen, Cronenberg chooses to employ the strategy of displacement and conscious decommercialisation, thus ultimately enabling the viewers to see the iconic figure of a car in an entirely new light and adding another filmic dimension to his intersemiotic translation of Ballard's book.

Moving on from questions of genre, it is important to note that the literary source text introduces another trope that is inherently cinematic, namely the figure of celebrity. While both the novel and the cinematic adaptation contain references to cultural figures who were never part

of the film industry (such as Albert Camus and John F. Kennedy), the quintessential celebrity is still embodied in the image of a movie star, i.e., Elizabeth Taylor[5] in the novel, James Dean and Jayne Mansfield in the film. Cronenberg puts further emphasis on this trope by supplementing the narrative with a lengthy scene that does not appear in the source text (although, as shall be seen in the following paragraph, the novel does contain a slight hint of the events devised by the filmmaker). The scene in question begins with the monologue that Vaughan delivers: in a highly theatrical, engaging manner, he is introducing the modestly sized audience, of which James and Helen are also a part, to the circumstances that led to the death of James Dean, an iconic Hollywood actor who died in a car crash in 1955. In the scene, the replicas of the two vehicles involved in the incident are standing in front of the spectators, ready to be steered straight into a collision by two professional stuntmen, with Vaughan himself jumping into the passenger seat of the replica of Dean's car. The vehicles pull back, speed towards one another, then collide, followed by a few seconds of stunned silence from the audience. As one of the stuntmen, dazed and shaken, stumbles out of the crashed car, applause erupts. Having avoided serious injuries, Vaughan climbs out of his vehicle and continues the narrative that has been started earlier. Contrariwise, the other stuntman, Seagrave, while alive, seems to have suffered a concussion and is unable to stand on his own. Helen, a doctor, rushes to help. As the police arrive on the scene, Vaughan, Seagrave, James and Helen escape through the nearby woods.

While there is mention of a car crash reenactment in the novel, Ballard's description is far less detailed. More notably, there are no celebrities involved in the incident that is being recreated, with the book recounting it as "a multiple pile-up in which seven people had died on the North Circular Road during the previous summer" (Ballard, 2014, p. 66). Vaughan's role in the recreation is less central as well: while, significantly, the novel's narrator notes that Vaughan is instructing Seagrave in a manner reminiscent of a "film director" (ibid.), it is not he but an anonymous, unseen commentator who is relaying the events for the audience. The crash itself is not described in the novel, with the plot jumping to its consequences "twenty minutes later" (Ballard, 2014, p. 67) as the characters are driving the concussed Seagrave to the hospital.

[5] While the figure of Elizabeth Taylor features prominently in the book, the cinematic adaptation includes no references to the actress, presumably due to legal concerns, as well as the fact that Taylor is linked to a concrete time period, which the filmmaker, intent as he seems to be on rendering the narrative more universal by keeping its time and space unspecified, has presumably decided to avoid.

By expanding the episode discussed above considerably, transforming Vaughan into the principal actor in the recreation, and including the figure of a prominent celebrity in the performance, Cronenberg achieves a twofold effect. Firstly, greater emphasis is successfully placed on the celebrity trope, bringing it to the forefront and adding a new cinematic dimension to the film: not only are the viewers watching a movie populated by characters who are played by famous actors (James Spader as James Ballard, Deborah Kara Unger as Catherine Ballard, Elias Koteas as Vaughan, and Holly Hunter as Helen Remington), but these characters are themselves obsessed with celebrities. A sense of narrative depth is thus created, with the film seemingly conscious of its own status as a fictionalised cinematic product.

The above is further enhanced by the second effect of Cronenberg's addition to the plot. In the scene described above, just like in the novel (albeit to a lesser extent), Vaughan is behaving very much like a "film director" (66). As Helen remarks, it is "his show": Vaughan addresses the audience, Vaughan selects the actors, Vaughan orchestrates the recreation of the crash, essentially presenting the spectators with his sole artistic vision. If he is the filmmaker and the car crash is his film, then the fictional Ballard, gazing at the spectacle in excited astonishment, ultimately becomes the viewer.

When it comes to the two men, this is far from the only scene in the movie where a similar dynamic is presented. The same can be said of the scene where Vaughan picks up a prostitute to have sex with in the back seat of the car, arranging her body in awkward positions while James looks on through the rear-view mirror; or the car wash scene, where Vaughan is having sex with Ballard's wife and the latter's role is again reduced that of a passive observer; or the scene where James, Catherine and Vaughan happen upon a recent car crash and, while Vaughan takes Catherine by the hand and directs her to pose next to a crashed vehicle in a seductive manner, all that James does is observe from a distance. The Ballard of the film *is* the viewer. With the help of frequent point-of-view shots, the actual viewership of the movie is encouraged to identify with his voyeurism. It should be stressed that the Baudrillardian logic of multiplication, successfully encoded in the filmic version of the book, seems to jump out of the screen and wrap the viewers up in it through the very act of gazing: their gaze is continuously multiplied, with the filmgoers watching James Ballard observing the events depicted in the film. Consequently, they become, in a sense, as complicit and as detached as the film's protagonist is. It could be argued that by

constructing a clear parallel between James and the viewers of the movie, Cronenberg extends the film's dispassionate, anesthetised semiotic system to include the real-life cinema-goers too. Just like the fictional James Ballard, the viewers are in charge of reading, interpreting and translating the images that the Vaughanian film director presents them with. As the literal makers of the meaning of whatever they are observing, they are invited to read the (hyper)reality shaped by Cronenberg in any way that they themselves see fit. Ultimately, through identification with the movie's protagonist, the audience is confronted directly with the dystopian world of *Crash* and the dispassionate nature of the human relationships depicted in the film, encouraging the viewers to question whether a similar mechanisation of romance and sex might have already found its way into their own daily lives.

As in the case of the adaptation's source text, the readings of a film as controversial and subversive as Cronenberg's *Crash* is necessarily raise questions of morality. While some scholars, such as Constable, argue that the novel's filmic adaptation presents a clearer moral stance, stating that "Cronenberg's film uses strategies that create critical distance <…> that reveals the pathology of technology by demonstrating its adverse effects on a particular group of characters" (Constable, 2011, p. 151), the authors of both source and target texts assert the exact opposite. Cronenberg, viewing a moral stance as a mere narrative device employed by most Hollywood movies to further the plot, refuses to utilise morality as a narrative strategy (Cronenberg & Ballard, 1996). Similarly, and even more emphatically, Ballard praises the absence of the moral frame in Cronenberg's adaptation, going so far as to hail it as "the main achievement" (Cronenberg & Ballard, 1996) of the film. According to the writer, rather than judging the events depicted, the movie presents them neutrally for the consideration of the audience. As a result, no moral distance is created between the film and the filmgoers. Following the lead of the director, it could be argued that the absence of established values proposed in the movie provides the viewership with a unique opportunity to create these values by themselves, or rather to measure their existing moral stances against the ethical excesses of the film, presented here in an impartial, hypercritical, consciously indifferent manner. Regarded in this way, i.e., as a litmus test of the values, attitudes and interpretative proclivities of the audience, Cronenberg's adaptation can be argued to be more than just a film—rather, it may be perceived as a veritable exercise in reading, interpreting and, of course, translating, with the latter term being viewed in this thesis as largely synonymous with meaning-making.

5.2 The Filmic Dialogue of Cronenberg's *Crash*

In a polysemiotic rendition of a piece of literature, which is, despite the observations put forward by some researchers, still conventionally treated as *mono*semiotic, dialogue could reasonably be claimed to represent the only direct link between the source and the target texts. During the process of adaptation, the narrative lines of the source material are translated into the audiovisual language of the cinematic medium, while the dialogic lines of the target text must necessarily comprise, first and foremost, of a verbal code. The dialogic exchanges hence play a crucial role in any comparative analysis of a screen adaptation and its literary source. If the original text has been subjected to significant alterations, the utterances of the film's characters bear clear traces of such textual shifts. Conversely, in the cases of direct transfer, nowhere is it quite as direct as in those instances of filmic dialogue that relocate the phrase borrowed from the novel straight to the cinematic screen. Given the role of cinematic dialogue in the genre of film adaptation, the present subchapter sets out to examine the utterances of the characters in Cronenberg's movie in relation to their literary counterparts as they appear in Ballard's novel.

It has been remarked in the preceding section of the thesis that during the construction of the script that was to become the basis for the screen adaptation of Ballard's work, Cronenberg transferred a fair amount of the original text directly to the dialogic lines of the film's characters. One such instance, where the Ballard of the novel reflects on the relief brought about by him having taken part in "an actual accident" (Ballard, 2014, p. 28) has already been noted. Nonetheless, there are certainly more examples of such direct transfer to be gleaned from Cronenberg's filmic dialogue. Consider Table 1, which provides a comparison between the on-screen utterances of the characters and the equivalent excerpts from the novel:

Table 1. *Cases of direct transfer*

TIMECODE	FILM DIALOGUE	NOVEL
00:09:57–00:10:22	JAMES: Where's the car? CATHERINE: Outside, in the visitors' car park. JAMES: What? <…> CATHERINE: My car, not yours. Yours is a complete wreck. The police had to drag it to the pound. It's behind the station.	On an impulse I asked, 'Where's the car?' 'Outside – in the consultant's car-park.' 'What?' I sat up on one elbow, trying to see through the window behind my bed. '*My* car, not yours.' <…>

TIMECODE	FILM DIALOGUE	NOVEL
		'It's a complete wreck. The police dragged it to the pound behind the station.' (Ballard, 2014, p. 25)
00:14:16–00:14:50	JAMES: I should've gone to the funeral. CATHERINE: I wish I had. They bury the dead so quickly. They should leave them lying around for months. JAMES: What about his wife, the woman doctor? Have you been to visit her yet? CATHERINE: I couldn't. I feel too close to her.	'You should have gone to the funeral,' I told her. 'I wish I had,' she replied promptly. 'They bury the dead so quickly – they should leave them lying around for months. <…> 'What about his wife?' I asked. 'The woman doctor? Have you visited her yet?' 'No, I couldn't. I feel too close to her.' (Ballard, 2014, p. 33)
00:08:59–00:09:06	JAMES: This ward is reserved for air crash victims. The beds are kept waiting.	'This ward is reserved for air-crash victims,' I told Catherine. 'The beds are kept waiting.' (Ballard, 2014, p. 21)
00:12:51–00:13:28	CATHERINE: Both of the front wheels of the car and the engine were driven back into the driver's section. Oh, and the floor. Blood still marked the hood like little streamers of black lace running toward the windshield wiper gutters. Tiny flecks were spattered across the seat and steering wheel, and the instrument panel was buckled inwards, cracking the clock and speedometer dials.	Both front wheels and the engine had been driven back into the driver's section, bowing the floor. Blood still marked the bonnet, streamers of black lace running towards the windshield wiper gutters. Minute flecks were spattered across the seat and steering wheel. <…> In front of me the instrument panel had been buckled inwards, cracking the clock and speedometer dials. (Ballard, 2014, pp. 52-53)

Source: created by the author

In all of the given examples, the slight alterations made to the text of the novel are merely of a cosmetic nature. In the first instance, the noun "consultant's" used by the writer is replaced with a clearer and less contextually bound noun "visitors'" in the film, while the phrase *My car, not yours.* is reassigned from James to Catherine. In the second example, the only significant change is the shift in pronouns, transforming the presumably accusatory statement ***You*** *should have gone to the funeral.* to a considerably more introspective one: ***I*** *should've gone to the funeral*. The third extract is an example of word-for-word transfer, with no alterations made to the original phrasing, while the last instance demonstrates the adapter's decision to lift the passage from the novelistic narrator's stream of consciousness and transform it into the dialogic lines delivered by the wife of

the film's protagonist. The scene wherein this retelling of the damage suffered by James's car occurs is also subject to a notable shift. The Ballard of the novel is describing the wreckage as he peruses his crashed vehicle at the Northolt police pound. In contrast, the movie has the damage detailed sensuously by Catherine as her husband is lying in a hospital bed after the accident, with the woman masturbating him as she does so. First and foremost, such a decision helps the director put further emphasis on the connection between sexuality and the image of a crashed car. The act of reassigning a portion of the literary protagonist's narration to the filmic wife also serves to enhance her role in the adaptation, as well as the collective role of the two characters as a married couple who, despite their unconventional life choices, are still pursuing a romantic, loving relationship.

As far as direct transfers from the source to the target text are concerned, another notable instance is an utterance delivered by Vaughan and borrowed directly from Ballard's short story *Crash!*. It has been noted in the previous section of the thesis that this piece of writing, published in the collection of short stories called *The Atrocity Exhibition*, served as an inspiration for the novel he was to compose several years later. Consider Table 2:

Table 2. *Direct transfer from* The Atrocity Exhibition

TIMECODE	FILM DIALOGUE	*THE ATROCITY EXHIBITION*
00:52:42–00:53:01	VAUGHAN: For example, the car crash is a fertilizing rather than a destructive event, a liberation of sexual energy mediating the sexuality of those who have died with an intensity that's impossible in any other form.	It is clear that the car crash is seen as a fertilizing rather than a destructive experience, a liberation of sexual and machine libido, mediating the sexuality of those who have died with an erotic intensity impossible in any other form. (Ballard, 1990)

Source: created by the author

In the film, the excerpt in question is relegated to a particularly significant scene: as Ballard and Vaughan are driving down the road at night in the latter's Lincoln convertible, Vaughan sets out to describe his 'project' to the giddy, fascinated James. On the one hand, the vocabulary used by the crash enthusiast is less formal compared to the distinctly analytic, medicalised wording of the passage as it appears in the short story: the colloquial expression "for example" replaces the source text's formal phrase "it is clear", while the passive voice used in the short story ("the car crash is seen as…") is reworked into the active voice ("the car crash is a fertilizing <…> event") occurring

much more frequently in conversational English. On the other hand, however, the adapted sentence retains the complex structure of academic language, thus portraying Vaughan as more than a perverted fetishist—rather, he is a scientist, a "specialist in international computerized traffic systems", an informed, knowledgeable car crash scholar engaged in his own research project.

While the instances of direct transfer aid in anchoring the filmic adaptation firmly to its source text, more radical transformations of the novel's verbal content reveal the adapter's creative contribution. For the purpose of exploring such shifts as observed in the filmic dialogue, Table 3 should be considered:

Table 3. *Shifts in the source text when transformed into film dialogue*

TIMECODE	FILM DIALOGUE	NOVEL
00:13:30–00:13:50	CATHERINE: The cabin was deformed. There was dust, glass, plastic flakes everywhere inside. The carpeting was damp. It stank of blood and other body and machine fluids.	I thought of the dead man lying on the hood of the car. The blood rilling across the bruised cellulose was a more potent fluid than the semen cooling in his testicles. <…> Sitting here in this deformed cabin, filled with dust and damp carpeting, I tried to visualize myself at the moment of collision <…>. (Ballard, 2014, p. 52-53)
00:47:24–00:48:21	JAMES: Finish your story. HELEN: The junior pathologist at Ashford Hospital. Then the husband of a colleague of mine. Then... a trainee radiologist. Then the service manager at my garage. JAMES: You had sex with all those men in cars? Only in cars? HELEN: Yes. I didn't plan it that way. JAMES: Did you fantasize that Vaughan was photographing all these sex acts as though they were traffic accidents? HELEN: Yes. They felt like traffic accidents.	The day after her first sexual act with me, she had taken another lover, the junior pathologist at Ashford Hospital. From him she moved through a succession of men: the husband of a fellow woman doctor, a trainee radiologist, the service manager at her garage. What I noticed about these affairs <…> was the presence in each one of the automobile. All had taken place within a motor-car <…> Without Vaughan watching us, recording our postures and skin areas with his camera, my orgasm had seemed empty and sterile, a jerking away of waste tissue. (Ballard, 2014, p. 96-97)

Source: created by the author

The first extract of filmic dialogue originates from the scene already discussed above, i.e., the one wherein Catherine is recounting the consequences of the car crash to her bed-ridden husband. While the first half of her monologue serves as an example of direct transfer, the second half presents a loose reinterpretation of the source text. The sentences making up the on-screen lines are shortened and their syntactic structure is simplified, with all of them following the basic, repetitive pattern of 'subject-verb-object'. Notably, the effect created by the image of the "blood rilling across the bruised cellulose" (Ballard, 2014, p. 52), which conjures up a conjunction between the vehicular and the human bodies in the novel, is retained successfully in the film, albeit by different means: in the adaptation, it is the "body and machine fluids" that produce an equivalent effect in a more succinct, condensed manner.

Similarly to the first example, where the passage narrated by the novel's protagonist is transformed into a piece of filmic dialogue, the second extract presented in the table illustrates an analogous approach. James's narration is hereby transformed into a story told by Helen herself, hence allowing the film director to move away from the novelistic centring of the principal character and provide more substance to the portrayal of supporting characters like Helen. It is interesting to note how the importance of the presence of a vehicle in Helen's newfound sexual obsession, as well as of Vaughan's voyeuristic participation in it, is also preserved in the film, with the points raised by the novel's narrator being turned into the sources for the screen protagonist's fervent questioning.

It has been noted in the analysis of Ballard's novel provided in this thesis that the writer utilises repetition as an important literary and narrative device. While Cronenberg's script reduces the number of repetitions that the original text is replete with, it introduces reoccurring textual patterns of its own to the adaptation instead. Arguably the most significant of these is the phrase *Maybe the next one.*, which does not appear anywhere in the novel and thus constitutes the scriptwriter's own addition to the source material. Uttered four times over the duration of the film (twice by Catherine at the beginning of the movie, and twice by James in the final scene), it serves as yet another illustration of the adapter's penchant for condensing the complicated concepts presented by the writer into concise dialogic statements acting as suggestions for the interpretative path that the viewers may take. As has been indicated earlier on in the thesis, the world that the characters of the book inhabit is composed of endlessly multiplied series of signs, with human

bodies, sexual encounters and even sexuality itself ultimately being subsumed into this complex semiotic system. The "next one" that the film's characters are chasing after embodies an equivalent idea: they are caught up in a chain of sexual signifiers, always counting on the next sign in the series to generate some semblance of meaning. By having the phrase repeated four times at the key points in the film, Cronenberg brings the idea of a significatory chain into sharper focus, as well as frames the entire movie within it, providing the film with a circular structure that, similarly to the ceaselessly reproduced significatory chains in the novel, afford no satisfactory resolution to the purposely monotonous narrative.

Even more insistent in Cronenberg's script is the repetition of the phrase *I'm all right.* (or, alternatively, its interrogative variation—*Is he all right?* / *Are you all right?*). While an utterance like this may seem commonplace at first, it is repeated eight times within the relatively sparse dialogue of the film, emphasising its status as a verbal pattern. Moreover, the context that the phrase is used in at certain points within the narrative, as well as the manner of its usage, results in its standing out even further. Consider Table 4:

Table 4. *Repetitive pattern in Cronenberg's script*

TIMECODE	FILM DIALOGUE
00:46:57–00:47:04	HELEN: Have you come? JAMES: I'm all right.
00:50:25–00:50:35	JAMES: You're upset. HELEN: I'm all right. I'm all right now.
01:33:49–01:34:24	JAMES: Catherine… Are you all right? <…> CATHERINE: I think I'm all right. I think I'm all right.

Source: created by the author

In the first instance noted above, Helen and James are seen having sex mechanically in the back seat of the car. When asked frustratingly by Helen whether he has finished already, James answers that he is all right. In the context of this particular scene, the reply provided by the protagonist does not serve as a clear answer—instead, it aids James in brushing the woman's question off, as well as strengthens the textual pattern that Cronenberg seems to be crafting. In the second and third examples, this pattern is highlighted even further with the help of additional repetition. As far as this phrase is concerned, it can be asserted that it is not the utterance itself, but rather its regular reoccurrence that is accentuated in the filmic dialogue. Like the world portrayed by the director, the language used by its occupants is monotonous, cyclical and dull. With any real-world referents

lost in the clutter of the Baudrillardian hyperreal, all that the characters can do is engage in the process of multiplication, reproducing the same signifiers, which hardly even refer to anything at all by now, over and over again.

It is certainly true that, compared to the flourishing verbosity of Ballard's novel, the verbal component of Cronenberg's screen version may seem quite bare and tedious at first glance. However, what this thesis attempts to achieve in the present subchapter is to demonstrate that, once exposed and dissected, the dialogue of the cinematic adaptation discussed herein can flower into as many meanings, albeit disguised initially under the layer of deceptive brevity. If, as argued by the proponents of semiotics, meaning is indeed engendered first and foremost in the translative processes, then moving forward along the chain of translations should aid in fulfilling such an objective. The next link in the analysis attempted herein is, therefore, the intrasemiotic translation of the film's dialogue from the original English language into Lithuanian, rendered first in the form of voice-over translation, and afterwards, almost twenty years later, in the audiovisual translation mode of subtitling.

6. TRANSLATING THE (UN)TRANSLATABLE: CRONENBERG'S *CRASH* AND ITS TRANSLATION(S) INTO LITHUANIAN

In addition to presenting a useful tool for analysis, as well as bridging at least part of the gap between the verbal source material and the audiovisual target text, the dialogic utterances of the on-screen characters, once translated into other languages, provide a means for the original film to reach different audiences and cultures. Audiovisual translation thus promotes the continuous translatability of the adapted text itself, allowing it to persist on generating new meanings as it encounters, and wrestles with, unfamiliar linguistic and sociocultural codes. With this role of the audiovisual modes of translation in mind, the chapter at hand sets out to trace such significatory shifts by engaging in the comparative analysis of the English screen dialogue of *Crash* rendered into Lithuanian in the modes of subtitling and voice-over translation.

Cronenberg's film *Crash* was first aired on Lithuanian television in 2005 as part of a series of late-night screenings presented by Rytis Zemkauskas, a prominent Lithuanian journalist, TV producer and voice-over artist. The series in question, called "Snobo kinas" (Eng. *Cinema for Snobs*), aimed to introduce the local television audiences to films of a less commercial nature. Its selection of movies included such contemporary cinematic auteurs as Woody Allen, David Lynch, Gus Van Sant, Pedro Almodóvar and, of course, David Cronenberg. Given the often highly unconventional form and controversial subject matter of the films screened, broadcasting them on television occasionally required significant alterations to be made to the original filmic material. Cronenberg's *Crash* was also subject to censorship, with explicit sex scenes having been cut from the version broadcast in Lithuania, along with some of the dialogic lines exchanged over the course of said scenes. The television audience was thus offered a subdued, less shocking rendition of the original product. As noted in the previous chapter, the televised *Crash* was rendered into Lithuanian in the voice-over mode: the text was translated by Ilona Šalnienė, while the role of a voice-over artist was undertaken by Rytis Zemkauskas.

Nineteen years later, in March of 2024, *Crash* received yet another Lithuanian screening, this time in cinemas as part of the retrospective program of erotic horror films at the Vilnius International Film Festival, known locally as "Kino pavasaris". The cinemagoers were presented with the full, uncensored version of the film. The mode of audiovisual translation employed during

the screenings differed from the televised iteration discussed in the previous paragraph, and involved Lithuanian subtitles translated by Marius Juknevičius.

It should be noted that the comparative analysis of the two translated versions is intriguing on several levels. First is the difference in time periods during which the two translated texts were produced. Separated by nineteen years and hence functioning as representations of different sociocultural contexts, the voice-over translation and the subtitled version may illustrate contrasting translation strategies adopted in today's increasingly liberal society, as opposed to the more conservative background of 2005. The contrasting screening methods hold similar promise: a televised broadcast is always aimed at a wider audience, and is thus necessarily subject to a stricter set of linguistic and moral standards, while film festival screenings, targeted as they are at a select group of viewers interested in non-commercial cinema, generally allow for more freedom and linguistic experimentation. As a result, the subtitled version of Cronenberg's *Crash* can be reasonably expected to be more explicit in terms of its choice of vocabulary than the voice-over TV translation. It should also be observed that the two audiovisual translation modes in question are characterised by their own sets of technical limitations, be they spatiotemporal or related to the very process of translation that the subtitling and voice-over specialists follow when producing their renditions. Consequently, differences determined by the translation modes themselves may be unearthed through the comparison of the two translated versions. All of the elements mentioned above, i.e., sociocultural context, broadcasting method and audiovisual translation mode, have a bearing on the overall translatability of a text, given that, to recall the statement by Glynn and Hadley, the aspect of translatability tends to be "as closely bound to questions surrounding what 'ought' to be translated as to what 'can' be translated" (Glynn & Hadley, 2021, p. 20). A thorough examination of the two renderings of the same source text can hence provide a researcher with an opportunity to capture some of the continuous shifts and fluctuations involved in the (un)translatability of the material at hand.

To begin with, it should be noted that the titles of the two filmic versions were translated differently: while the title of the televised, voiced-over film was rendered as „Autokatastrofa" (Eng. *Car Accident*; Literal: *Auto Catastrophe*), the subtitler translated it as „Avarija", which is arguably more accurate. The most likely reason for such a divergence is the fact that the voiced-over version of the filmic adaptation was screened five years before the publication of the literary

translation of Ballard's novel *Crash* into Lithuanian ("Avarija", translated by Marius Burokas and published in 2010 by "Kitos knygos" (Eng. *Other Books*). With this rendition having been in circulation for the past fourteen years, it may be argued that the translation of the film's title was likely not subject to discussion for the subtitling specialist. Given its status as the filmic adaptation of a prominent novel, the title of the movie had to refer to its source, thus maintaining a clear intertextual link between the two. Conversely, the voiced-over iteration of the film, broadcasted as it was before Burokas's literary translation was published, could still resort to interpretation in regards to its Lithuanian title. In other words, the title boasted a greater degree of translatability in 2005 than it did in 2024, with the rendering in question already well-established by the latter point.

As to the possible justification for the variant "Autokatastrofa" (2005), it could be argued that this particular rendition is more ominous, more emotionally charged, more connotative of danger due to the use of the noun *catastrophe*. Nonetheless, such a translation caused the title to increase in length when compared to the original, with one syllable of the English version extending into six. The source title is short and to-the-point: it is important to remember here that in the case of the short story that the novel has originated from, the word *crash* is followed by an exclamation mark (*Crash!*), hence coming closer to an onomatopoeic interjection than a regular noun. While the version "Avarija" still results in a longer title, the relative brevity and matter-of-factness of this particular variant seems to be more successful at capturing the spirit of the original.

As far as the spirit of Cronenberg's adaptation is concerned, it is reasonable to maintain that an accurate rendition of a film so sexually explicit may be hindered by a broadcasting method not suited for its highly controversial nature. It has been noted above that the televised version of the film was subject to strict censorship, with sex scenes having been cut from the broadcast. Not only does this impede the narrative of the film (given that the director himself has emphasised how important these scenes are to the plot of the movie), but it also results in significant dialogic exchanges being erased. For instance, the scene wherein James and Catherine are having sex while the latter is fantasising aloud about Vaughan is, in fact, the only point in the film where Ballard's medicalised, desexualised vocabulary is employed so vividly in relation to sex. Such terms as "penis", "anus" and "semen" render the sex scene in question curiously devoid of eroticism. Along with the deletion of the episode from the TV version, such linguistic nuances were lost as well, having been relegated to the domain of untranslatability, or rather non-translatability, on the basis

of the idea that some scenes, and their accompanying utterances, ought not to be televised and translated.

The translation of the swear words was also affected by the rules and restrictions typical of the selected broadcasting method. Consider Table 5:

Table 5. *Translation of swear words*

TIMECODE	ORIGINAL TEXT	VOICE-OVER TRANSLATION	SUBTITLES
00:20:37–00:20:41	HELEN: I'll wear a **fucking** kimono if I want to.	Apsivilksiu **prakeiktą** kimono, jei norėsiu.	Užsidėsiu **sušiktą** kimono, jei panorėsiu.
00:07:13–00:07:14	BALLARD: Shit.	Velnias.	Šūdas.
01:14:00–01:14:01	SALESMAN: Oh, shit.	Po perkūnais.	O, šūdas.
00:36:16–0:36:18	SEAGRAVE: I want really big **tits**.	Noriu tikrai didelių **papų**.	Bet noriu būt su labai dideliais **papais**.
01:14:04–01:14:07	SALESMAN: **Fuck**! This is bad. This is really bad.	**Šūdas**! Negerai. Labai negerai.	**Šūdas**… Labai blogai.

Source: created by the author

The given examples demonstrate that swear words tend to be neutralised in the voice-over translation, presumably due to stricter standards applied to televised broadcasts. In the first instance, the original swear word *fucking* is replaced with the Lithuanian adjective *prakeiktą* (BT: *damned*), which is considered to be more acceptable in the target language. The second and third examples illustrate a similar strategy: the English word *shit* is rendered as *velnias* in Lithuanian (BT: *devil*), and the exclamation *Oh, shit.* is transformed into an archaic, considerably more subdued Lithuanian expression *Po perkūnais.* In contrast, the subtitler treats such vocabulary with a much greater degree of freedom. Only in two cases over the duration of the movie does the voiced-over version render non-normative lexis in an equivalent manner (see the last two examples in Table 5).

A similar observation can be made in regards to slang translation, with the subtitler employing such vocabulary as the result of a conscious stylistic choice, contrary to the strategy adopted by the voice-over translator:

Table 6. *Translation of slang*

TIMECODE	ORIGINAL TEXT	VOICE-OVER TRANSLATION	SUBTITLES
00:54:00–00:54:03	VAUGHAN: Just me and my friend here. PROSTITUTE: All right, that's **cool**.	– Taip, su manim ir mano draugu. – **Važiuojam**.	– Tik mes su draugu. – Gerai, **faina**.
00:54:06–00:54:08	VAUGHAN: I'm clean. PROSTITUTE: You got a **place**?	– Nieko. – Turi **kur**?	– Aš švarus. – Turi **plotą**?

Source: created by the author

While the subtitler renders the colloquialism *cool* into an equivalent Lithuanian slang term *faina*, or even adds a colloquial expression in a place where the original text remains relatively normative (as in the case of the second example), the lines of the voice-over translation are more reserved in this respect, favouring regular vocabulary wherever possible.

If the broadcasting method affects the choices made by the audiovisual translators when working on a particular filmic text, so does the translation mode itself. In the theoretical section of the thesis, text condensation has been discussed as an important feature of both voice-over translation and subtitling, with scholars arguing whether voiced-over texts display a lesser or greater degree of condensation when compared to their subtitled counterparts. In an attempt to answer this question at least within the limits of the present case study, Table 7 presents some of the more illustrative examples of text condensation identified in the two translations examined herein:

Table 7. *Cases of text condensation*

TIMECODE	ORIGINAL TEXT	VOICE-OVER TRANSLATION	SUBTITLES
00:22:07–00:22:11	HELEN: You've bought yourself exactly the same car again.	Nusipirkai lygiai tokią pat.	Nusipirkai visiškai tokią pačią mašiną.
01:12:28–01:12:30	GABRIELLE: This interests me.	Va šita.	Mane domina šita.
00:51:17–00:51:21	VAUGHAN: Don't clean it. Don't touch anything else.	Nevalyt. Nieko neliest.	Neplaut jos. Nieko daugiau neliesti.
00:30:53–00:30:56	JAMES: Is this part of the act, or are they really hurt?	Ar čia vaidinimo dalis ar jie susižeidė iš tikrųjų?	Čia šou dalis, ar jie tikrai sužeisti?

TIMECODE	ORIGINAL TEXT	VOICE-OVER TRANSLATION	SUBTITLES
00:37:03–00:37:06	JAMES: Do you live here with Seagrave?	Ar tu čia gyveni, su Sigreivu?	Gyveni čia su Sigreivu?
00:51:02–00:51:13	VAUGHAN: I mean a **crash car with a history**. Camus' Vega... Nathaniel West's station wagon... Grace Kelly's Rover 3500.	Ne, kalbu apie automobilį, **patyrusį istorinę avariją**. Kamiu „Facel Vega“, Natanielio Vesto furgoną, Greisės Keli „Roverį“…	Ne, turiu omeny, mašiną **su istorija**. „Vega“, kuria važiavo Kamiu, Natanielio Vesto furgonėlis, Greisės Keli „Rover 3500“…

Source: created by the author

It could be maintained that, on the whole, the voice-over translation of Cronenberg's *Crash* is marked by a degree of condensation similar to that observed in the subtitled version. Nonetheless, the solutions applied in the two texts when condensing the original utterances differ considerably in some cases. As far as the voiced-over film is concerned, the translation relies heavily on the visual context of the movie in certain instances, which allows the resulting Lithuanian utterances to be condensed to a significant extent. In the first example provided above, the object that the phrase refers to, i.e., James's new car, is erased from the voiced-over utterance, hence enabling the translator to craft a much shorter sentence. Instead of the original line *You've bought yourself exactly the same car again.*, the translator offers the following: *Nusipirkai lygiai tokią pat.* (BT: *You've bought exactly the same one.*). There is no real need to specify what object is being referred to in this particular instance, as has been done in the subtitled version—prior to the phrase being uttered, Helen and James are seen sitting in his new car, with Helen looking around and assessing the vehicle critically. The visual context thus makes the reference clear, with no help required from the verbal code.

A similar strategy is applied in the second example, albeit it is the verb rather than the noun denoting a particular object in the original sentence that is erased during the process of condensation. The voiced-over utterance is a brief prase: *Va šita* (BT: *This one*.). Given that Gabrielle utters the phrase while leaning lovingly against a shiny new car in a showroom, almost embracing the vehicle with her hands, the visuals are again suggestive enough to indicate her interest without any aid required from the verbal channel, which, contrary to the voice-over translation, is introduced in the subtitled line.

The third instance illustrates a more general tendency of the voice-over translator to delete unnecessary information from the original utterance, with this strategy coming into sharper focus when compared to the subtitles. In the example, the pronoun *it* (*jos* in the subtitled version), referring to the car in this instance, is eliminated from the voice-over translation, thus resulting in a sentence that consists of a single verb: *Nevalyt.* (BT: *No cleaning.*). Similarly, while the second sentence in the utterance is translated literally in the subtitles, the voiced-over phrase omits the adverb *daugiau* (BT: *more*), thus condensing the Lithuanian remark even further. It is also important to note that the endings of both infinitive verbs in the Lithuanian utterance are shortened in the voice-over translation (*nevalyt* instead of *nevalyti*; *neliest* instead of *neliesti*), which reflects the colloquial manner of speech, while the subtitles choose to shorten only one of them, thus again resulting in a slightly longer phrase: *Neplau**t*** and *nelies**ti***.

The voice-over translation in question does employ a variety of creative solutions with a view towards condensing the original utterances. Nevertheless, this strategy of condensation is lacking in some cases. The fourth and fifth examples given in the Table 7 serve to depict a trend of leaving superfluous pronouns untouched (*tu gyveni* (BT: *you live*) instead of *gyveni* (BT: *live*), disregarding shorter synonyms that could be used in place of the phrases selected (*iš tikrųjų* instead of *tikrai* (BT: both meaning *truly*), and formulating questions in the formal style (***Ar tu** čia gyveni?* (BT: *Do you live here?*) rather than constructing a shorter version by eliminating the particle "ar" (BT: the auxiliary verb *do*) and the pronoun "tu" (BT: *you*), which would be typical of colloquial language: *Gyveni čia?* (BT: *Live here?*). In contrast, the subtitles tend to avoid such pitfalls, demonstrating a good grasp on the principles of text condensation.

The last extract provided in the table raises intriguing questions about the limits of text condensation in relation to explanatory translation that may be required considering the radically different sociocultural context of the translated text. In this example, the literal translation of the original phrase presented in the subtitles may be described as accurate, brief and sufficiently informative, given that in the scene where the discussed utterance occurs, the speaker, Vaughan, goes on to clarify the meaning behind the phrase *crash car with a history* by providing specific historical examples of celebrities who famously died in a car crash. However, contrary to the English-speaking audience, the Lithuanian viewership might not be familiar with the cultural references in question. This might be the reason why the voice-over translator chooses to forego

the edict of text condensation in favour of the explanation that these are all car crashes with historical significance, i.e., not vehicles that were merely driven by historical figures, but cars that witnessed the deaths of celebrities. The line: *Ne, kalbu apie automobilį, patyrusį istorinę avariją.* (BT: *No, I'm talking about a car involved in a crash of historical significance*), if compared to the subtitled line *Ne, turiu omeny mašiną su istorija.* (BT: *No, I mean a car with a history.*), presents a lengthier variant that is nonetheless adapted more readily to the sociocultural context and the cultural references that may not be immediately clear to the target audience. In contrast, the subtitled version adheres to the requirements of text condensation by relying on the audience to be familiar with the cultural references provided, and arguably renders these references less clear by failing to mention that it is a "crash car" that Vaughan has in mind, rather than any car with a historical role attached to it.

The word-for-word translation that the subtitles tend to exemplify indicates a point of departure for the examination of the manner in which the process of translation may influence the final wording of the rendered product, making it either more or less translatable. Naturally, the workflow involved in producing subtitles differs from the procedures that crafting a voice-over translation requires. A translator working within the subtitling mode is nowadays customarily provided with a subtitle file in the source language. In addition to preventing misunderstandings or mishearings that may occur if the translator did not have the written utterances to refer to, as well as aiding in text condensation (given that these subtitles are often already condensed to some extent), this allows the subtitling specialist to rely on the pre-existing timecodes and sentence segmentation. While the audiovisual material of the cinematic product, with its manifold visual and aural cues, must still be considered by the translator, the translation process itself mostly involves rendering written phrases presented in one language into written utterances that employ a different linguistic code.

As far as voice-over translation is concerned, it is nowadays performed in a similar manner: the translator is presented with a script containing the original utterances, which are then rendered intrasemiotically into the target language, with the voice-over specialist referring continuously to the audiovisual material. It should be stressed, however, that the voice-over translation of Cronenberg's *Crash* dates back to the year 2005, when the workflow employed so consistently today was still in its developing stages. Consequently, it was not uncommon for the professional

working on the voice-over translation of a particular film or television program not to have access to the written script or, in some cases, even the visual material, hence being required to translate the source text while referring exclusively to the aural utterances as they were presented in the audio file received. This would undoubtedly end up complicating the translation process, rendering the resulting text more susceptible to inaccuracies and mistakes, as well as burdening the translators with the additional responsibility of either writing out the spoken utterances themselves or rendering the spoken source phrases straight into the written sentences in the target language, only for the latter to be read aloud again by the voice-over artist at the end of the process.

The two audiovisual translation modes discussed in this thesis, as well as the processes involved in producing a subtitled or a voiced-over text, are subject to their own unique advantages and drawbacks, which close analysis of the two Lithuanian translations may help elucidate. As far as the Lithuanian subtitles of the film are concerned, the penchant for literal translation observed in this target text has already been touched upon briefly above. Consider the following examples that serve to illustrate such cases, as opposed to the more flexible phrasing of the voice-over translation:

Table 8. *Literal translation in the Lithuanian subtitles*

TIMECODE	ORIGINAL TEXT	SUBTITLES	VOICE-OVER TRANSLATION
00:20:51–00:20:56	HELEN: I work in the immigration department.	Dirbu imigracijos departamente.	Aš ten dirbu, imigracijos skyriuj.
00:21:17–00:21:27	JAMES: All this **traffic**… I'm not sure I can deal with it. HELEN: **It's much worse now.** Have you noticed that?	– Pažiūrėk, koks **eismas**... Nežinau, ar susitvarkysiu su juo. – **Jis labai pablogėjo.** Pastebėjai?	– Pažiūrėk, kiek **mašinų**… Nežinau, ar susidorosiu. – **Dabar jų daug daugiau negu anksčiau.**
00:28:38–00:28:42	VAUGHAN: James Dean **was on his way** to an automobile race in Salinas.	Džeimsas Dinas **buvo pakeliui** į automobilių lenktynes Salinase.	Džeimsas Dinas **vyko** į automobilių lenktynes Salinese.
00:29:06–00:29:19	VAUGHAN: Our cars are not equipped with roll cages or seat belts. / We rely solely on the skill of our drivers for our safety... / so that we can bring you the	Mūsų automobiliuose neįrengti apsauginiai narvai su saugos diržais. / Savo saugumą aklai atiduodame į mūsų vairuotojų rankas... / Kad	Kad reginys būtų visiškai tikroviškas, mūsų automobiliuose nėra metalinių rėmų ir saugos diržų. Savo saugumą mes patikim patyrusiems vairuotojams.

TIMECODE	ORIGINAL TEXT	SUBTITLES	VOICE-OVER TRANSLATION
	ultimate in authenticity.	jums galėtume atkurti visišką autentiškumą.	
00:35:22–00:35:32	VAUGHAN: Seagrave, I really would like... / to work out the details... / of the Jayne Mansfield crash with you.	Sigreivai, aš tikrai norėčiau... / Su tavim aptarti detales... / Dėl Džeinės Mansfild avarijos.	Sigreivai, labai norėčiau su tavim aptarti Džeinės Mensfild avarijos smulkmenas.

Source: created by the author

It is clear from the first three examples that the subtitles adhere strictly to the original structure of the source sentences, replicating it to the detriment of some of the target phrases. For instance, the first utterance in the Table 8 is, for all intents and purposes, translated correctly in the Lithuanian subtitles. However, the comparison of this particular rendition to the voiced-over version has revealed that the source text could have been rephrased, resulting in an utterance that sounds considerably more natural in the target language. Similarly, in the second extract, the noun *traffic* is translated literally, using the formal noun *eismas*, in the subtitles, as the following line *It's much worse now*. is rendered accordingly with the use of the pronoun *it*: ***Jis*** *labai pablogėjo.* (BT: *It has worsened.*). While the English language does tend to describe heavy traffic as "bad", using the two adjectives as synonymous in this context, the Lithuanian adjective *blogas*, as well as the verb *blogėti*, does not conventionally collocate with the noun *eismas*. Coupled with the use of the pronoun *jis*, which may represent both an inanimate object and a person, such an attempt results in an awkward, confusing rendition that does not sound natural in the target language. The voiced-over utterance again presents a better alternative: it replaces the Lithuanian noun *eismas* (BT: *traffic*) with the noun *mašinos* (BT: *cars*). In order to convey the idea of traffic being heavier than usual, the voice-over translator chooses to indicate that there seem to be more cars on the roads than there used to be earlier. Such a rephrasing is suited more readily to the peculiarities of the Lithuanian spoken language.

The third extract illustrates an instance wherein word-for-word translation exemplified by the subtitles is at odds with the requirements of text condensation. While it is possible to render the English expression *to be on one's way* literally as *būti pakeliui* in Lithuanian, this results in a phrase that increases in length considerably compared to the voiced-over version, which

paraphrases and shortens the source utterance to a single word: *vykti* (BT: *to drive to*) instead of the long phrase *to be on one's way to*. Hence, in this instance, similarly to the previous two examples, the voice-over translation distances itself more successfully from the source text, employing the strategy of paraphrasing to produce translated utterances that adequately convey the basic message of the original lines while adapting the wording and sentence structure to the requirements of the target language.

The last two examples offer one possible explanation for the prevalence of literal translation identified in the Lithuanian subtitles of Cronenberg's film. The diagonal slashes within the phrases indicate the points wherein one subtitle ends and another begins, hence carrying part of the utterance over to the next segment. It is clear from these instances that the Lithuanian translation follows the segmentation of the English subtitles, resulting in syntactic structures that are not encountered commonly in the target language. In contrast, the voiced-over text treats the source sentences with considerable flexibility and tends to reorder the syntactic elements to a significant extent. Due to not being chained to a pre-segmented, written version of the original text, the voice-over translation in question gains more freedom in regards to the linguistic choices that can be made. As far as the subtitling mode is concerned, while such pre-segmentation aids the translator in terms of speeding up the workflow, it can also create additional restrictions and limitations. It could be argued that the source subtitles can always be re-segmented by the subtitling specialist—however, an opposing point may be raised as well, questioning whether the scope of the work performed by an audiovisual translator should include tasks of a technical rather than linguistic nature, with text segmentation falling into the domain of the former. In any case, such instances serve to demonstrate that the process of translation and the material that the translator is (or is not) provided with can result in the formation of new translational challenges, thus impacting the degree to which the source text is translatable.

Regarding the lack of adequate source material and the effect that this may have on the translated product, the voice-over translation of the given adaptation serves as an informative illustration. Table 9 presents several instances of mishearings and mistranslations, likely caused by the translator not being provided with access to either the visual material or the printed script:

Table 9. *Mistranslations and mishearings in the Lithuanian voice-over translation*

TIMECODE	ORIGINAL TEXT	VOICE-OVER TRANSLATION	SUBTITLES
00:05:27–00:05:33	JAMES: Where were you? HELEN: In **a private aircraft hangar**.	– Kur buvai? – **Privataus lėktuvo angare**.	– Kur tu buvai? – **Privačiame oro uosto angare**.
00:49:54–00:50:00	SEAGRAVE: That tape player's fucked. That's what it is. It always does that.	Tos vaizdajuostės sumautos. Jos visada baigiasi vienodai.	Tam grotuvui šakės. Štai kas yra. Jis visada taip daro.
00:27:47–00:27:53	VAUGHAN: You up for this? SEAGRAVE: You bet.	– Tavo piniginė gerokai pastorės. – Neabejoju.	– Kaip tu? Pasiruošęs? – Dar ir kaip.
01:03:36–01:03:39	JAMES: I must have driven through something.	Jis turbūt ką nors pervažiavo.	Turbūt ant kažko užvažiavau.

Source: created by the author

In the first extract, the voiced-over rendition of the phrase *In a private aircraft hangar.* as *Privataus lėktuvo angare.* (BT: *In a hangar of a private plane.*), implies a singular object. However, the utterance in question refers to the opening scene of the movie, where Catherine is seen having sex amongst numerous private planes. While such visual context helps the subtitling specialist to interpret the source utterance correctly, the likely absence of visual material that the voice-over translator may have been forced to contend with results in an inaccurate rendition. The second example offers a similar challenge. With no video available, the original utterance remains open to interpretation, while the presence of the visual material makes the meaning immediately clear: the characters in the scene are fascinated by the tape playing on the television set, yet the tape player hinders their enjoyment by causing the tape in question to malfunction. In fact, it is not the tapes that are referred to as "fucked" in the original lines, but rather the tape player itself. The last two extracts are instances of source phrases that have been likely misheard by the voice-over translator faced with the absence of a written script. Thus, it can be reasonably concluded that the inaccessibility of adequate source material has made the original dialogic exchanges less translatable for the voice-over specialist than they would have been otherwise.

When dealing with the challenges related to translatability, the translators often employ contrasting strategies. In regards to the filmic dialogue of Cronenberg's *Crash*, one of such challenges is the repetition of phrases, the stylistic significance of which has been discussed in the previous section of the thesis. While such verbal patterns may work their way into the source text with relative ease, this might not necessarily be the case as far as the target language is concerned. Consider Table 10, comparing the manner in which these repetitions are rendered in the Lithuanian subtitles and the voiced-over utterances:

Table 10. *Translation of repeated phrases*

TIMECODE	ORIGINAL TEXT	VOICE-OVER TRANSLATION	SUBTITLES
00:06:29–00:06:35	CATHERINE: Maybe the next one. Maybe the next one.	Gal kita. Gal kita.	Galbūt kitą kartą. Galbūt kitą kartą.
01:34:44–01:34:59	JAMES: Maybe the next one, darling. Maybe the next one.	Gal kitą kartą, brangioji. Gal kitą.	Gal kitą kartą, brangioji. Gal kitą kartą.
00:32:34–00:32:37	VAUGHAN: How you doin'? SEAGRAVE: I'm all right.	– Kaip tu? – Neblogai.	– Kaip tu? – Viskas gerai.
00:46:57–00:47:04	HELEN: Have you come? JAMES: I'm all right.	-	– Tu baigei? – Man viskas gerai.
00:50:29–00:50:35	HELEN: I'm all right. I'm all right now.	Jau gerai. Dabar jau gerai.	Viskas gerai. Jau geriau.
01:34:11–01:34:24	CATHERINE: I think I'm all right. I think I'm all right.	Manau, kad sveika. Manau, sveika.	Atrodo, viskas gerai.

Source: created by the author

In the case of the first two extracts, both the voice-over translation and the subtitles are consciously maintaining the repetitive pattern of the source text. While there are variations in the vocabulary observed in both versions (*galbūt* (BT: *maybe*) in the first appearance of the phrase in the subtitles, *gal* (BT: *may*) in the second instance; *gal kita* (BT: *maybe the next one*) in its first appearance within the voiced-over text, *gal kitą kartą* (BT: *maybe next time*) in the case of the second utterance), the reoccurrence of the phrase is made clear in both renditions. Additionally, it is worth noting that in the case of the second appearance of the utterance, the voice-over translation combines the edict of text condensation with deliberate repetition of the utterance as similar to the

first extract as possible. Instead of the first sentence in the second example (*Gal kitą kartą.*) being repeated word for word, its second iteration is shortened in the voiced-over version (*Gal kitą.; BT: Maybe next.*). Hence, the voice-over specialist both condenses the source text and ties the Lithuanian utterance to the first occurrence of the phrase, which is almost identical in the voice-over translation save for the grammatical case resulting in the variation of a single letter (*Gal kit**ą**.* instead of *Gal kit**a**.*).

Contrary to the first reiterated pattern discussed above, the second repeated utterance, *I'm alright*, illustrates divergent strategies adopted by the two translators. While the voiced-over text disregards the repetition in the original dialogue and adapts all of the utterances in question to their immediate context (except for the fourth instance, which is missing from the voiced-over rendition due to censorship), the subtitles demonstrate an opposite approach and repeat the same expression *Viskas gerai.* (BT: *All is right.*) throughout the target text. It could be argued that this is done at the expense of style, resulting in a phrasing that is not quite as natural as that of the voiced-over version. Nonetheless, an assertion may also be made that the dialogic exchanges between the characters in the film must be marked by a degree of artificiality, which might render such stylistic sacrifice acceptable, and perhaps even preferable to a certain extent.

The comparative analysis of the source and target texts has revealed that, in the majority of cases, the meaning of the source utterance shifts at least slightly during the process of translation. Given this observation, it can be asserted that the rendition of any text can rarely be fully equivalent to the original it seeks to transpose. This is, ultimately, the basic principle located at the very core of the concept of (un)translatability: if no utterance is fully translatable nor untranslatable, the paramount objective of any translation is the rendition of the source text in a manner resulting in new meanings that enrich, rather than impoverish, the original. There are instances in the two Lithuanian translations that exemplify such generation of meaning, made even clearer by the comparison of the separate interpretative paths taken by the two translations. Consider Table 11:

Table 11. *Shifts in meaning evoked by the source text*

TIMECODE	ORIGINAL TEXT	VOICE-OVER TRANSLATION	SUBTITLES
00:39:57–00:40:11	VAUGHAN: It's something we are all intimately involved in. The reshaping of the human body by modern technology.	Mes visi su tuo intymiai susiję. Tai – žmogaus kūno performavimas su moderniųjų technologijų pagalba.	Tai kažkas, į ką visi esam giliai įsitraukę. Žmogaus kūno transformacija naudojant šiuolaikines technologijas.
00:52:42–00:53:01	VAUGHAN: For example, the car crash is a fertilizing rather than a destructive event. A liberation of sexual energy **mediating** the sexuality of those who have died with an intensity that's impossible in any other form.	Pavyzdžiui, autokatastrofa – labiau vaisingas, o ne sunaikinantis reiškinys. Seksualinės energijos išlaisvinimas, kuris taip **smarkiai pakeičia** žuvusiųjų seksualumą kaip nė viena kita forma.	Pavyzdžiui, automobilio avarija yra labiau vaisingas, nei destruktyvus įvykis. Tai seksualinės energijos išlaisvinimas. Žuvusiųjų seksualinės energijos **mediavimas** su intensyvumu, kurio neįmanoma pasiekti jokia kita forma.
00:33:13–00:33:29	VAUGHAN: **Was I glib?** "James Dean died of a broken neck and became immortal." I couldn't resist.	**Įtikinamai kalbėjau?** „Džeimsas Dinas mirė dėl lūžusio kaklo ir tapo nemirtingu.“ Negalėjau atsispirt.	**Skambūs žodžiai, tiesa?** „Džeimsas Dinas mirė lūžus kaklui ir tapo nemirtingas.“ Bet negalėjau atsispirti.
00:20:03–00:20:06	JAMES: I somehow find myself driving again.	Vėl užsimaniau vairuot.	Kažkokiu būdu vėl pradėjau vairuoti.
00:22:42–00:22:46	HELEN: It won't be busy this time of day.	Šiuo metu ten nebus daug mašinų.	Tokiu metu ten nebus daug žmonių.

Source: created by the author

The first extract is particularly significant to the film discussed: this is where Vaughan formulates his “project”, attempting to define the conceptual core of his obsession. The wording in the source utterance deserves closer examination: the involvement of human beings in their relationship with technology is described as *intimate* by the speaker, and the unmediated, corporeal connection between the two is further emphasised by the mention of *human body*, which is *reshaped* by way of a direct encounter with technology. The bodily and the technological are thus linked in a highly personal, carnal manner, reminiscent of a sexual encounter in its intimacy. While the voiced-over utterance maintains this connotation in its literal rendering of the first sentence (*Mes visi su tuo* ***intymiai*** *susiję;* BT: *We are all intimately connected to it.*), the subtitles shift the meaning slightly

by replacing the original adverb *intimately* with the Lithuanian adverb *giliai* (BT: *deeply*), which, while still connoting an intense connection, lacks the bodily, sexual element present in the source phrase. The two target renditions of the second sentence offer an even more intriguing perspective regarding significatory shifts. As has been discussed above, the source text stresses the immediate, unmediated nature of the relationship between people and technology. In both the voice-over translation and the subtitles, however, the presence of a mediating agent seems to be implied. The voiced-over utterance, *Tai – žmogaus kūno performavimas su moderniųjų technologijų pagalba.*, can be back-translated as *It is the reshaping of the human body* ***with the help*** *of modern technologies*., while the back translation of the subtitled line, *Žmogaus kūno transformacija naudojant šiuolaikines technologijas.*, is *The transformation of the human body* ***using*** *modern technologies.* Hence, it is not the technologies themselves that are actively transforming the very nature of the human flesh—rather, in the two Lithuanian renderings, there is a third party involved, a force that utilises technological tools as a means of reshaping the human element. Technology is thus demoted from a principal actor to a mediator, which results in an alteration that may seem slight at first, yet is conceptually significant and illustrative of the fluctuations in meaning that may occur due to the relatively minor decisions regarding the wording of the target phrase.

While the first example constructs a mediator in the place where none has been observed before, the second instance demonstrates the translational challenges evoked by rendering such conceptual mediation clear. In the extract transferred directly from Ballard's short story *Crash!*, the Vaughan of the cinematic adaptation describes the effect of a car crash as "a liberation of sexual energy *mediating* the sexuality of those who have died with an intensity that's impossible in any other form". This sexuality, in its original, raw state, is thus absorbed by the automobile accident and dispersed in the semiotic system of the world at large, with the crash transforming the sexual energy of the people involved in it into a sign and consequently rendering it capable of multiplication and consumption. Hence, the concept of mediation is crucial to Vaughan's perception of the car crash as a point wherein a new form of sexuality is generated.

The two Lithuanian translations of this particular utterance adopt different strategies when rendering it into the target language. The subtitler employs literal translation and uses the international term *mediavimas* (BT: *mediation*) to preserve the idea expressed in the original utterance. This results in a phrase that offers a sufficiently accurate interpretation of the meaning reflected in the source text. In contrast, the voice-over translation offers a paraphrased text:

Seksualinės energijos išlaisvinimas, kuris taip smarkiai pakeičia žuvusiųjų seksualumą kaip nė viena kita forma. (BT: *A liberation of sexual energy that* ***alters*** *the sexuality of the dead persons so* ***radically*** *that no other form could compare.*). Mediation here turns into transformation: rather than dispersing the liberated, yet basically unchanged, sexualities of the car crash victims within the semiotic system, the automobile accident transfigures this carnal energy in a radical manner. Thus, another shift in meaning thus occurs, highlighting the potential of less translatable elements within the source text to shape new significatory paths as the translators grapple with the linguistic challenges presented.

The third example illustrates the difficulties faced when translating the English adjective *glib*, defined by the Oxford Learner's Dictionary as "using words that are clever, but are not sincere, and do not show much thought". While this monosyllabic word may seem straightforward at first glance, its meaning is highly specific, denoting both outward astuteness and inward carelessness. Given the context in which the utterance is delivered in the film, it is more likely that the speaker, Vaughan, leans more towards the negative connotation encoded in it: the character repeats a phrase uttered by him after the recreation of James Dean's crash, seemingly looking for approval as a result of being unsure of himself, then follows with this phrase as an expression of justification: *Negalėjau atsispirt.* (BT: *Couldn't resist*.). Nonetheless, both translators seem to favour the positive connotation of the adjective: the voice-over specialist translates it as *Įtikinamai kalbėjau?* (BT: *Did I sound convincing?*), and the subtitler selects the following expression: *Skambūs žodžiai, tiesa?* (BT: *Grand choice of wording, isn't it?*). The interpretative efforts of both translators are evident in their respective renditions, demonstrating the ways in which the meaning of the source text can be morphed during the process of translation.

While more straightforward than the first three examples, the last two of them still serve to illuminate the potential for significatory shifts inherent in the linguistic rendition of the source text. When translating the penultimate utterance, *I somehow find myself driving again.*, into Lithuanian, the voice-over translator stresses the desire of James Ballard to pick up driving again after his accident: *Vėl* ***užsimaniau*** *vairuot.* (BT: *I found myself* ***craving*** *to drive again.*). In contrast, the subtitled line, being more faithful to the original in this regard, presents the circumstance of the protagonist finding himself behind the wheel once more as unrelated to any conscious decision on his part: ***Kažkokiu būdu*** *vėl pradėjau vairuoti.* (BT: ***In some way****, I started driving again.*). After

all, in the Ballardian world of the novel, technologies tend to subsume human will and desire, divesting the characters of any agency that they may have once boasted.

The last utterance, *It won't be busy this time of day.*, provided in the given table is spoken by Helen Remington as James and her are driving to the airport garage to have sex for the first time. The two Lithuanian translations present separate interpretations of the line at hand: while the voiced-over utterance stresses the presence of the cars (*Šiuo metu ten nebus daug mašinų.*; BT: *There won't be many **cars** in there at this time.*), the subtitles focus on the people (*Tokiu metu ten nebus daug žmonių.;* BT: *There won't be many **people** in there at such a time.*). Due to the ambiguous nature of the original phrase *It won't be busy*, both variants could be viewed as equally valid. Seeing as the pair is expecting to engage in sexual intercourse, it makes sense for Helen to be considering the number of people that may be present in the garage. However, in a film as heavily car-centred as Cronenberg's *Crash* is, the presence of vehicles, or lack thereof, could be argued to hold more significance. While the source utterance in question is undoubtedly translatable, the exact manner in which it *should* be rendered remains subject to discussion, hence demonstrating the fluidity inherent in the complex semiotic processes of translation and interpretation.

It is the hope of the author of this thesis that the analysis presented in this chapter has served to designate the concept of translatability as a continuously shifting criterion, affected as it is by a multitude of factors, including the sociocultural context of a particular translation, the broadcasting method, the selected mode of translation, and the translation strategies adopted. Inherent in the potentially less translatable elements of any source text, however, is their ability to generate new meanings during the process of interpretation, viewed in this thesis as a necessary prerequisite for translation. While destabilising on the one hand, such points of (un)translatability can result in creative solutions that produce interpretations adapted more readily to the immediate context of a particular linguistic rendering. Even more importantly, these elements promote the continuous regeneration of the source text, allowing it to go on circulating within the ever-morphing semiotic systems that the original version can gain access to with the help of translation.

CONCLUSIONS

The analysis of James Graham Ballard's novel *Crash* (1973) and its screen adaptation under the same title (1996) directed by David Cronenberg, as well as of the translations of the latter into Lithuanian within the modes of voice-over and subtitling, allowed for the following conclusions:

1. Approached from a semiotic perspective, Ballard's novel reveals a fundamental concern with signs, codes, meaning-making processes and issues related to translatability. Given the protagonist's persistent preoccupation with language, as well as with the numerous ways in which meaning is encoded in linguistic expressions, human bodies, modern technologies, various forms of media, and the world of the novel at large, it can be reasonably asserted that the obsession displayed by the characters of *Crash* is indeed of a semiotic, rather than sexual, nature.
2. As a source text, Ballard's novelistic narrative offers a mixture of elements that render it easier to be transformed into a filmic product, as well as features that may pose a challenge for the cinematic adapter. The former are determined by the fact that mass media, along with cinema and television, feature prominently in the prose work, while the latter have to do primarily with the verbosity of the original novel, its inherently linguistic concerns, and the lack of direct speech.
3. In general, Cronenberg's screen adaptation of the novel can be regarded as a faithful one, with the key characters of the original narrative and the events making up its plot retained in the screen version. In order to preserve the highly stylised, purposefully artificial nature of the language employed in the source text, the adapter dramatises a fair number of passages narrated in the novel, reworking them into the dialogic lines of the film, or chooses to adjust such excerpts as seldom as possible.
4. When dealing with the semiotic projection of the original novel, Cronenberg adopts the strategy of shifting the type of the signs that suffuse the source text from verbal to visual. In place of words and phrases evoking the significatory preoccupations of the novel's protagonist, the adapter juxtaposes camera shots that demonstrate the visual imprinting of the human body by a variety of signs. The linguistic conjunctions of the source text that shape the connection between the human and the technological are transformed in a similar manner, with Cronenberg relying on visual parallels to communicate an equivalent idea.

5. Despite adapting a literary text to screen, Cronenberg is also intent on speaking about the nature of cinema as he does so. The filmmaker achieves this objective with the help of consistent subversion of generic formulas encountered in the field of cinema, including the tropes associated with pornography and car commercials. The self-reflexivity of the source text is thus successfully reproduced: while the original novel reflects on language, verbal codes and reading, the film engages in the exploration of inherently cinematic themes.
6. The comparative analysis of the film's dialogic lines as translated into Lithuanian in the modes of voice-over and subtitling has revealed that the translatability of the audiovisual text in question is affected by the following: the socio-cultural context of the linguistic rendition, the broadcasting method selected for the screening of the movie, the audiovisual translation mode utilised, the strategies employed by the translators, the translation process, and the source material that the translator is, or is not, provided with. Depending on the nature of each of these elements, the degree to which the source text is translatable shifts in either a positive or a negative manner.
7. The examination of the two translations in question demonstrates that the meaning of the source utterance tends to be modified during the process of translation, with the resulting target phrase depending on the interpretative path that the translator decides to follow. The more complex, less translatable elements of the source text are particularly susceptible to such divergent interpretations, hence leading to the potential generation of new meanings.
8. The concept of translatability can thus be conceived of as a continuously shifting criterion affected by a multitude of different factors. However, the less translatable elements of the source text need not be perceived as a threat to the overall quality of the translated. As textual items that require a more thorough interpretation on the part of the translator, they are capable of generating new meanings through interpretative and translational processes, resulting in solutions that may be adapted more readily to the context of a particular linguistic rendering. Moreover, such elements promote a continuous regeneration of the source text itself, allowing it to be exposed to new semiotic systems and encouraging further gain in meaning.

SUMMARY

The given MA thesis offers the analysis of David Cronenberg's screen adaptation *Crash* (1996) based on the novel under the same title (1973) by James Graham Ballard, as well as of the Lithuanian translations of the film's dialogic lines within the modes of voice-over and subtitling. The material is examined from the semiotic perspective, by focusing on the notion of translatability as a necessary prerequisite for the production of meaning, yet treating the less translatable elements of a source text as the points that may open up new interpretative paths for the translator and hence lead to more fruitful, creative translation strategies being adopted. The thesis seeks to expand the scope of audiovisual translation studies by demonstrating the potential benefits of the semiotic approach to translation, thus adding to the current scholarly discussions of the concept of translatability, and drawing attention to the unduly overlooked mode of voice-over translation in particular.

The analysis provided in the thesis includes a semiotic reading of Ballard's novel, a close examination of the book's intersemiotic translation performed by Cronenberg, as well as a comparison of the translational decisions made by the performers of the film's Lithuanian subtitles and voice-over translation.

The paper concludes that Cronenberg's filmic version of the literary source text provides a relatively faithful rendition of the novelistic narrative while also shifting the nature of the book's semiotic preoccupation from verbal signs to the visual code. In addition, the movie supplements the original material with inherently cinematic themes as well. The analysis of the interlinguistic renditions of the filmic dialogue demonstrates that the notion of translatability is best perceived as a continuously shifting criterion, impacted as it is by numerous different factors, including the audiovisual translation mode utilised, the processes involved in producing a particular target text, and the broadcasting method selected for the screening of the audiovisual product at hand. The empirical research undertaken in the thesis also suggests that the less translatable elements of the source text can indeed result in interpretations and translation strategies that promote creative solutions to the challenges encountered, as well as encourage further generation of meaning.

SANTRAUKA

Šiame magistro darbe yra analizuojama Davido Cronenbergo režisuota Jameso Grahamo Ballardo romano „Avarija“ (1973) kino adaptacija (1996) bei jos lietuviškos užklotinio vertimo ir subtitruotos versijos. Į tyrimo medžiagą žvelgiama iš semiotinės perspektyvos, išverčiamumo sampratą laikant būtina reikšmių generavimo sąlyga, o iššūkius keliančiuose verčiamo teksto elementuose įžvelgiant paskatą formuotis naujiems interpretaciniams keliams, raginantiems vertėjus priimti drąsius, kūrybiškus sprendimus. Magistro darbu siekiama praplėsti audiovizualinio vertimo studijų lauką parodant galimus semiotinės prieigos privalumus, prisidedant prie diskusijų apie išverčiamumą ir atkreipiant dėmesį į dažnai vis dar nuvertinamą užklotinio vertimo modą.

Darbe pateikiama semiotinė Ballardo romano analizė, išsamus intersemiotinio knygos vertimo į kino kalbą tyrimas bei sprendimų, kuriuos priėmė lietuviškų subtitrų ir užklotinio vertimo autoriai, palyginimas.

Atliktas tyrimas atskleidžia, kad Cronenbergo režisuota kinematografinė Ballardo romano versija gali būti laikoma tiksliu ir originalui ištikimu intersemiotiniu vertimu, pastangas išsaugoti svarbiausius stilistinius romano elementus derinančiu su semiotinės tematikos pobūdžio transformavimu. Žodiniai literatūrinio teksto ženklai čia virsta vaizdiniais, o knygos medžiaga papildoma kino laukui svarbiomis temomis. Interlingvistinių filmo dialogo vertimų analizė parodo, kad išverčiamumas turėtų būti suvokiamas kaip nuolat kintantis kriterijus, kuriam įtaką daro daugybė skirtingų veiksnių, įskaitant pasirinktą audiovizualinio vertimo modą, patį vertimo procesą bei audiovizualinio produkto transliavimo būdą. Magistro darbe pateikiamas empirinis tyrimas leidžia daryti išvadą, kad didesnius išverčiamumo iššūkius keliantys originalaus teksto elementai iš tiesų sudaro galimybę naujoms interpretacijoms formuotis ir netikėtoms vertimo strategijoms rastis.

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