

*Requiem for a Dream: A Comparison and Analysis of the Novel
and its Film Adaptation*

TDK

29 June 2022

Dániel Tóth
Dr. Harry Edward Bailey

Contents

Introduction	3
Adaptation theory	3
Short plot summary	7
Author and director biography	8
Novel and movie background	8
Directorial adaptation techniques and choices	9
Scenes for analysis	17
Musical score	23
Conclusion	24
Works Cited	27

Introduction

This paper will examine how Darren Aronofsky was able to faithfully adapt one of Hubert Selby Jr.'s most famous novels, *Requiem for a Dream* (1978) to the screen. My definition of “faithful” entails that the original work’s main ideas and themes, as well as its atmosphere, was reproduced or recreated to great effect without noticeable alterations. To do that, I will be analysing parts of the movie, contrasting some of its scenes to the book, and comparing similarities between themes, ideas, and aspects of the movie and the book. The book is known for its distinctive atmosphere, lack of a happy ending, and unique way of storytelling and writing, which were all recreated in some way by the director. Many aspects of the book on their own make for interesting changes to the typical Hollywood movie formula, but Aronofsky chose not to stray far from the source material, making very few noteworthy changes. Since these two works are different media, not everything has been recreated, some bits have been left out, others added or reimagined, which are side effects of the nature of the medium, but none of the changes were – in my opinion – to the detriment of the movie. After having established the basics of book adaptation, I will focus on analysing key scenes of my choosing, breaking down techniques of the director, the editing of the movie, and talking about sound design and the soundtrack, which I believe to be key pieces of movie.

The adaptation was both a commercial and a critical success and this is owing, I believe, to every aspect of the movie coming together as well as it did, whether it is acting, directing, editing, cinematography, sound, or writing. I will build my case on three distinct pillars which are mainly responsible for the movie’s success: cinematographic techniques, editing, and sound. While these are just three aspects and I will occasionally be examining more than just them, they make up the main argument of my paper and will serve as my most important metrics of authenticity.

Adaptation theory

A large portion of the film adaptation theory in this paper is based on George Bluestone’s book *Novels into Film* (1957). While it is a rather old book, it is one of the first ones written in its field and it still contains a plethora of relevant information, especially for the movie in question. As Bluestone put it, the filmmaker, when translating a work, faces completely different challenges

compared to a novelist when he commits to telling a story (Bluestone 34-35). The filmmaker, unlike the novelist, has to create a product that has enough mass appeal to turn a profit. With books, the amount of money needed to break even is miniscule compared to that of even a low-budget movie. According to Investopedia, the average Hollywood movie cost around one hundred million dollars in 2019, which is one of the main reasons financiers are so adamant on making returns on their rather sizeable investments (Mueller). Not just money but also creative constraints, enforced by the MPA (Motion Picture Association), technology, and the nature of the medium also loom over the creator's head. This again ties back to money, as a film with a stricter rating, say "NC-17", meaning adults only, has a severely restricted potential audience, causing the studio to lose out on much desired revenue. Coincidentally, this is a relevant issue for the movie at hand, as Aronofsky appealed the then MPAA's (now MPA) original NC-17 rating, which was given for the orgy scene at the end. His appeal for an R-rating (meaning children with adult supervision would have been permitted) was denied, so the movie was released "unrated", without any changes, as he was unwilling to cut it in any way (Willmore). In the director's commentary, he mentions the importance of the rating system, but criticizes its hypocrisy. While violence and blood are generally accepted, sexuality is not so much, which is – according to him – incredibly hypocritical (*Requiem*, Aronofsky).

As mentioned above, movies, especially the ones made in Hollywood, are treated more as investments than art. This is one challenge the novelist does not face, at least not to the same extent. The director already has the heavy burden of having to translate the words of the author onto the big screen – which is no small feat – but his job is made even harder thanks to outside pressure, such as money and time constraints, written (MPA) and unwritten conventions or rules (the hero always wins, the villain always loses). This film serves as a great counterexample to many of these, as it was not made by a Hollywood studio, and many of these aspects will be part of the discussion. Most movies face the challenges of having to turn a profit, since this is an industry built on making money, not art, which puts the director in a rather uncomfortable position, since he is supposed to be an artist after all (Bluestone 62-64).

Roman Jakobson, a Russian-American linguist, puts forward a theory that there are three kinds of translations: intralingual, which means within the bounds of one language; interlingual, meaning between two languages; and finally – the relevant one – intersemiotic, which, in our context, refers to a filmmaker translating a novelist's work onto the big screen. The point behind

this kind of translation is that the important part is the message, not the means through which it way conveyed. Simply, it means that the filmmaker focuses on delivering the author's messages, themes, and ideas, using the tools of filmmaking, such as editing, cinematography, acting, etc (Jakobson 233). As Orson Welles, the legendary filmmaker best known for *Citizen Kane* (1941), said, "The enemy of art is the absence of limitations" (Squire 78), which is a sentiment that Bluestone, too, echoes in his book. Both for novels and for movies, limits are one of the main driving forces behind creativity, as the creators are often forced to come up with solutions to their problems. Aronofsky and Eric Watson, his producer, consider the limited time and money as one of the key reasons behind the ingenuity of the movie, as it constantly forced them and the crew to come up with clever solutions to problems that an abundance of time or money would have otherwise fixed. Watson says in an interview for *Vulture* magazine that "[a] personal theory of Darren and mine is that some filmmakers, as they've evolved over time, have not improved because there's been no financial limitations for them" (Willmore). Once again, money is inescapable when it comes to adapting novels – or even to creating any film in general. Bluestone argues that the creation cost of movies is just so astronomical that it cannot afford variation, which is a problem the novelist does not face. Just as the novel before it, film – Hollywood – has instilled a culture of happy endings and righteous protagonists, and as a consequence it now cannot afford to deviate from its own formula (Bluestone 41).

Not only do the filmmaker and the novelist face a very different set of challenges, but they also have an array of very dissimilar tools they can use to tell their stories and achieve their respective visions (45). For the author, the primary tool is language, which has become a character in its own right, as Bluestone concludes. For the filmmaker, one such tool is the actors' facial expressions and body language. While the novelist will only use language to express what is happening in a scene, in a movie the actors play a key role in expressing further ideas or states of mind. Even though language is an integral part of novel and film alike, it is used differently in each of the two media. While books only use language to tell their stories, films use picture and sound, as well as a plethora of other tools. Bluestone brings up the example of mental states, which must be explicitly described by the author – using language – and then interpreted by the reader's imagination. (47-48). With a movie, a director must preselect an array of images, already interpreted by himself, and then leave those to be taken in by the viewer. To paraphrase Bluestone, films must use space, instead of language, to express thoughts, which is the opposite way around

in a novel (58-61). By doing that, they can lead the viewer – ideally – to infer thought, as thought itself cannot be shown directly.

Another important fact to mention in connection with the previous passage is that in the novel, language is sequential, each word added after the previous, whereas in a movie image and language are fused together, and are consequently inseparable (54-55). Unlike the novelist, who must express everything with words, the filmmaker conveys quite a lot using non-verbal methods of communication, such as facial expressions or body language and *mise-en-scène* (47). An actor need not say everything that was originally written by the author, since their body does a part of the work. For this reason, certain important details will never be spoken out loud, and thus can be easily missed by the viewer, should they look away in the wrong moment.

Tied very closely to language is time, which is a crucial element of storytelling. While novels operate with the three tenses (past, present, and future), the movie only has the present tense. To be fair, flashback sequences can be used to indicate differences in time, but they are still extensions of the ‘present’, indicated by a filter or some kind of unique colour grading. According to Henri Bergson, a French philosopher of the 19th-20th century, two types of time exist: psychological and chronological. For the novelist, chronological time exists on three levels: the time it takes for the novel to be read, the duration of the narrator’s time and the timespan of the events that transpire. Compared to that, in a movie, only the chronological duration of the viewing and the timespan of the narrative events are present (qtd. in Bluestone 48-49). As such, the moviemaker must come up with substitutes for these shortcomings of the medium, techniques to illustrate the past or the future. Also, as most films run from about an hour to four hours, the amount of time a viewer takes to experience them is a fraction compared to a book, which might take dozens of hours to finish. Our perception of time is completely different (50). Even though Selby’s book and Aronofsky’s movie tell basically the exact same story, while Aronofsky’s movie takes around 95 minutes to watch, Selby’s book takes around twice that, give or take a little, depending on the reader’s pace.

Yet another crucial difference between the two types of media is that with a book a reader can set their own pace, unlike with a movie, which has a predetermined pace, set by its director. While a DVD or a VOD (video-on-demand, e.g., Netflix) might be paused at will, in the cinema, which is the intended way for a movie to be viewed, no such thing is possible. The film moves at that set pace all throughout its runtime, without any breaks, but with the possibility of slow-motion

sequences or montages. While the two might tell the exact same story, they will feel completely different, solely because of the nature of the media. Because of this, sacrifices must be made by the filmmaker as for what to keep and what to cut, since a movie must tell the same story, but in a shorter timeframe. This has the effect of making the film feel denser and much more fast-paced. This is also the case with *Requiem*, which feels incredibly fast-paced in movie form, though that is not solely because it is a different medium, but also because of certain editorial techniques.

One key advantage the filmmaker does have over the novelist is their ability to manipulate the scenes after they have been shot, through the power of editing. Once a book has been written, nothing else can be done with it, but with a movie, a large portion of the work happens in the editing room. Raymond Spottiswoode, a British producer, calls editing the “grammar of the film” (qtd. In Bluestone 18). Vsevolod Pudovkin, a Russian director and screenwriter, says that through editing the filmmaker can create their “filmic time” and “filmic space” (qtd. in Bluestone 52). Through the power of editing, the director can convey centuries in mere seconds if they so wish with a montage, or they can slow down the events of a handful of seconds into twenty minutes through slow-motion if they so desire (52). By distorting time and space, the director can manipulate his story in a way that language simply cannot (60-61). Elements of this can be seen in *Requiem* in a scene when the protagonist’s mother keeps checking her mailbox in a montage which encompasses a month in around ten seconds.

While these were just some aspects of the big picture, I believe they encompass the most important parts of book adaptation theory. Adapting a novel is an immense undertaking and entails much, much more than described in this chapter. With that in mind, in the following sections, I will cover some of the specific adaptation techniques used in the movie by dissecting specific scenes. Editing, sound, cinematography will each be analysed in the context of this movie.

Short plot summary

Requiem for a Dream is a novel written by Hubert Selby Jr. It was published in 1978 and it was adapted into a movie in 2000 by Darren Aronofsky. The book tells the tragic story of four New Yorkers who each succumb to drug addiction while chasing their dreams. The story revolves around Harry Goldfarb, a youngster who dreams of opening his own business together with his girlfriend, Marion Silver, who, unlike Harry, comes from a well-off family. Harry’s widowed mother, Sara, and his close friend Tyrone C. Love are the other two main characters. Sara’s dream

is to be on television, and Tyrone wants to escape the ghetto more than anything else. As the story progresses, they sacrifice more and more in pursuit of their dreams, right until they lose their very selves in the process.

Author and director biography

Hubert Selby Jr. was an American writer, best known for *Last Exit to Brooklyn* (1964) and *Requiem for a Dream*, both of which were later adapted into successful movies. Selby is known for his depiction of addiction and urban despair along with his signature style of immersive and blunt writing. Born in Brooklyn on 23 July 1928, Selby was the only child in a modest family. He dropped out of school at the age of fifteen (“Hubert Selby Jr.”) and soon after was diagnosed with tuberculosis during his war service. Working as a merchant seaman during the war, he was given a year at most by doctors at the time. Throughout his life he constantly battled addiction, due to the painkillers he was given following his surgery. This contributed to his portrayal of addiction, having beat it not once, but twice. It is also worthy of mention that Selby was a self-taught writer, having had no prior training and just deciding one day to pick up a pen. Strangely, he wrote his works sober, and not only did he vastly outlive his doctors’ predictions, but he also lived to see both of his most famous novels adapted to the big screen. Selby eventually passed away from lung disease on 26 April 2004 (“Hubert Selby Jr.”).

Darren Aronofsky is an American film director, producer, and screenwriter. Best-known for *Black Swan* (2010) and *Requiem for a Dream*, Aronofsky attended Harvard University, where he studied film and social anthropology. Aronofsky first made a name for himself with his thesis film *Supermarket Sweep*, which earned him a spot at the National Student Academy Awards Finals. Just like Selby, he too was born in Brooklyn, albeit in a different part of town (“Darren Aronofsky”). So far, Aronofsky has been nominated for both an Academy Award and a BAFTA Award for Best Directing for *Black Swan* and several of his movies’ lead actors have been also nominated for Academy Awards for Best Actor/Actress in a Leading Role (*Darren*, IMDb).

Novel and movie background

Selby wrote *Requiem for a Dream* in just six weeks in his Los Angeles home, having moved there to start a new life post-addiction in the mid-1960s. By this time, he had beaten

addiction twice, morphine the first time and heroin the second. Having joined Alcoholics Anonymous, he was now leading a life free of substances. Having already published two novels, *Last Exit to Brooklyn* and *The Room* (1971), Selby has already begun establishing himself as a writer. It was after this novel, however, that he truly established himself, going on to teach at the University of Southern California. While Selby always wanted to turn his story into a film, having gone so far as to write a script, he never actually realized this dream until years later, when he met Darren Aronofsky (*Requiem*, Aronofsky).

Aronofsky, having earned some credit with his prior film, *Pi* (1998), was convinced by his co-writer and producer, Eric Watson, to adapt the novel. Fortunately for all parties involved, Selby was thrilled by the idea, and sold the rights for a nominal sum. The script eventually came together through a co-production between Aronofsky and Selby, as both had written their own screenplays based on the original work. Not having much success with financing, Aronofsky struggled with securing funding for the movie, even though it was for an already established story to be created by an already established director. With a modest budget, Aronofsky was able to sign on big names for the project, such as Ellen Burstyn and Jared Leto. While the director describes the production as a “war” which had to be won, the hard work has paid off (*Requiem*, Aronofsky). The movie went on to be a commercial and critical success, which is not always the case for adaptations.

Directorial adaptation techniques and choices

As a result of a limited budget, time constraints, as well as some personal choices, Aronofsky and his crew made several alterations to Selby’s story, but they made them all while making sure the core themes, ideas, and messages of the book stayed the same. It is the same uncompromising portrayal of addiction, complete with all of the novel’s stylistic choices, adapted through the use of clever techniques. A hallmark of the book is its immersive writing style, which is one Selby’s signature techniques. This style has two main components. One of them is the result of Selby wanting to write uninterrupted, which he achieved by not using apostrophes and instead writing forward slashes, because the latter was more at hand than the former on his typewriter (“Hubert Selby Jr.”). This has the effect of making “I’ll” look like “I//l” in the text. The other, more significant of the two parts is the lack of quotation marks in his dialogue, which has the effect of turning entire scenes into one big block of text. Thus, the reader cannot always tell if an internal monologue has begun or ended, or if there is a dream sequence, nor its beginning or end. The

purpose of this technique is to draw the reader closer to the characters, putting them right next to their innermost thoughts. This style also has the added effect of showing the chaos and turmoil inside the head of a substance abuser to the reader. The book is also known as rather fast paced, taking no breaks once the story begins right until the very end. This makes it feel like the characters can never catch a break and always have some kind of an obstacle to overcome. The movie achieved this effect through an editing style which ramps up as the movie goes on, through the use of hip-hop montages and through a lack of filters or special colour grading when dream sequences are shown, among other small, subtle techniques.

The movie opens with a scene from “Tappy Tibbons’ Month of Fury”, which is a self-help show for the masses. This is the very first noticeable change Aronofsky made. This show is the condensed and simplified version of the countless TV shows that Sara watches in the novel. Not only would there not have been time, let alone resources or money to create separate shows for Sara to watch, it would not have served the plot in any way either. This is the first example of the “hard sacrifices” – to use Bluestone’s words – that Aronofsky had to make. The host of the show, Tappy Tibbons, is a character created by the director and brought to life by Christopher McDonald. He is based on self-motivational gurus, such as Tony Robbins, and most of his lines were ad-libbed by the actor during audition, which Aronofsky liked so much that he chose to keep them (*Requiem*, Aronofsky). The show’s host has three principles for people looking to turn their lives around, all in just thirty days. First, no red meat; second, no refined sugar. The third principle is deliberately never revealed, but in the director’s commentary Aronofsky states it is no orgasms. Sara is addicted to the TV, she wants to be on it, no matter the cost. This drives her crazy, as she becomes obsessed with fitting into her red dress that she wore to her son’s graduation a decade ago. The story is about addiction in general, and Sara’s addiction is just one of the four the viewers witness in the movie. It does not necessarily have to be drugs: both Aronofsky and Selby share the view that addiction can be to anything, whether it is sugar, drugs, or alcohol, it does not matter. The director also wanted the movie to be timeless, something that is still “applicable” to humanity 50 years later, as addiction is a human trait which transcends time, culture, gender or race; it something we all share, no matter our origins (*Requiem*, Aronofsky).

Another quickly and easily noticeable change – for those familiar with New York city, that is – is the change of scenery from the Bronx to Coney Island. While Selby’s story in the novel takes place in the former, Aronofsky changed the movie to take place in the latter, since that is

where he grew up, that was the area he knew personally. Selby was specifically asked by Aronofsky about this change, and he was perfectly fine with it, calling the neighbourhoods “the same culture” (*Requiem*, Aronofsky). Coney Island also serves as an illustration of decay and degradation, mimicking the characters’ journey. Since Aronofsky knew the neighbourhood, he knew exactly what locations to use for specific shots, such as Harry and Tyrone’s conversation below a pier or the scene when a body gets thrown in a dumpster on the side of the road, which he describes as a hotbed for muggers and petty criminals. In his review for the *Los Angeles Times*, Kevin Thomas described this neighbourhood as a “rotting fantasy land”, so Aronofsky could not have chosen a better location if he wanted to. Aronofsky in the director’s commentary described it as fun and beautiful, but dangerous (*Requiem*, Aronofsky).

The main reason this movie works so well – mainly as an adaptation of the novel, but also as a standalone movie – is that the director, with his cast and crew, found ways to transpose many of Selby’s tricks from the book. A key difference between the two works is the lack of an omniscient narrator and the lack of internal monologue, which both play key roles in the novel. Instead, Aronofsky’s movie uses techniques, such as the SnorriCam, which he calls the “ultimate subjective camera” (*Requiem*, Aronofsky). The SnorriCam is a physical rig, affixed to the actor, framing them in the centre, making it appear as though only the surroundings are moving. This results in the scene looking dreamy, almost hallucinatory, highlighting precisely what the actor – the character – sees, hears, and feels. They become fixed points in their reality – and ours, thanks to the SnorriCam – further amplifying the effect of addiction, to viewer and character alike. This trick is one of the most noticeable techniques used throughout the movie by Aronofsky to mimic Selby’s character centric storytelling style. Apart from Harry, the protagonist, all characters have their own moments with the Snorricam, and I will be talking about Marion’s in detail later on. I chose that one scene specifically, because I believe it best encompasses the techniques the movie uses to recreate the feel of the novel.

Another key tool in the movie’s toolbox is the so-called “hip-hop montage.” Its name comes from the accompanying music, and these are one of the hallmarks of the movie. The director wanted to avoid “cheesy music montages”, a decision which gave birth to these montages instead. Aronofsky chose the music genre because he’s a fan of it, and felt it was underutilized in movies (*Requiem*, Aronofsky). The director was clear on the purpose and goal of the movie: he explicitly wanted it not to be a junkie movie, viewing drug culture and paraphernalia as uninteresting,

irrelevant aspects of addiction, and wanting to focus on the before and after effects of substance abuse. Aronofsky's clear vision from the start was to create a movie that showed the psychological and physical effects of drug addiction, without the usual inclusion of drug taking. For example, even though the three main characters are all heroin addicts, the word itself is never spoken out loud, nor do we see them use the needle, save for some special instances. These hip-hop montages mainly serve the purpose of hiding the act of substance abuse, turning the movie from a junkie movie into a before-and-after movie. We see someone before drugs, completely sober, then the montage, and then high on whatever it is they take, heroin or amphetamine. The montage itself is made up of small, fracture-of-a-second clips of lighters being lit, pupils dilating, or powder being snorted. These five- to six-second-long clips also have some punchy sound effects accompanying the images. The almost ritualistic repetition of these montages also mirrors the habitual substance abuse the characters go through. As I said, save for one instance, we don't see the needles, because it was not the point. The one time the movie purposefully shows someone inject heroin is at the tail-end, in a gruesome scene, meant to illustrate just how far Harry is willing to go for his fix, as he injects the needle into an infected spot in his arm, something no sane person would be willing to endure. This scene exists in the way it does to demonstrate to the audience what extreme lengths an addict is willing for their next coveted fix. Even though it is immensely painful, not to mention incredibly costly, as Harry eventually loses that arm because of this, he is still willing to do it, against the recommendation of his friend, Tyrone, because he cannot bear his miserable existence without another "hit."

Even though the movie omits the novel's omniscient narrator and its internal monologues, it still achieves an eerily similar perspective, which is a testament to how well the director did his job. While Selby's book also uses the narrative techniques I mentioned earlier, such as a lack of quotation marks, the movie uses rapid cuts, close-up shots, and SnorriCam scenes, among other techniques, to achieve the same effect. The movie purposefully does not mark dream sequences or hallucinations in any way, to stay true to the original writing style of the author. If something was not real, we find out only after the fact, just as if we were reading Selby's book.

Other techniques used by the movie include an editing and cinematographic style that makes the movie feel more claustrophobic as it goes on. The cuts ramp up, becoming more and more rapid, the camera moves closer and closer to the actors, there are more POV shots, as well as close-ups and extreme close-ups. Aronofsky also uses split-screen on several occasions, such

as the very first scene of the movie, when Harry steals his mother's TV because he needs money for drugs. It is also used in a scene when Harry and his girlfriend, Marion, are lying in bed right next to each other, which might make the use of split-screen redundant, but it is done on purpose. While physically the two characters are close, the split in frame serves to illustrate the split in their relationship, meaning while they are close to each other, this is only physically, not emotionally. This division shows how far apart the two lovers are, just as it shows how far apart mother and son are in the opening scene, as Sara locks herself in her bathroom, while she listens to his son rave about the TV being chained to the radiator. Even though the characters seem close physically, they are, in fact, not. While these would be bits of information we find out from the characters' internal monologues in the novel, because of a lack of that, this solution has been invented by the director as a replacement.

The aforementioned dream sequences and hallucinations are another important part of the movie. Since Selby chose not to indicate them, neither did Aronofsky. The director set out specifically to mimic Selby's style, and this area of the film is no exception (*Requiem*, Aronofsky). The way the movie reveals to the audience that what they have been watching was not real is through a sudden cut, coupled with a sound effect. Two great examples of this are Harry's first daydream on the pier with Marion, and Marion's dinner with her psychologist, Arnold, in which she imagines stabbing him with a fork. In Harry's daydream, just as he approaches Marion – who just so happens to be wearing the same red dress Sara wishes to wear – as Marion turns around, there is a subtle overlapping sound montage of a doorknob being turned, which causes Harry to turn around quickly. Then, we have a sudden cut to Tyrone, who just came home having procured some drugs for the two of them to use together. This sound effect of a doorknob is just once example for this phenomenon, which is meant to pull the viewer just a tad bit closer to the character, as if they were right next to them. While these sound effects are brief and of medium volume, they are just obtrusive enough for the audience to realize what it is they are hearing. While Marion's scene is different, as there is no sound effect there to accompany the sudden cut back to reality, the quick jump cut still feels immersive, as we are led to believe that her stabbing her dinner date in the hand with a fork was a real thing that happened, even if only for a brief period.

Some of the additions to the movie center around the two lovers, Harry and Marion. Both the daydream sequence on the pier that I talked about earlier, the rooftop scene in the beginning, and even the phone call scene at the very end are original ideas of the director. Another addition

that stands out for its clever framing is the scene in which we can see the couple on the shores of Brighton Beach. The scene is shot from a perspective that puts Coney Island behind Harry, the poor neighbourhood where he spent his childhood and Manhattan behind Marion, a much higher-class part of town where she grew up. I thought it highlights really well the attention to detail the cinematography of the movie received, and it is also a good example for showing, not telling, a key technique of movies.

As for a big alteration – one of the only major ones, in fact – the supermarket scene stands out, as it is completely absent from the novel. The book equivalent of this scene takes place in a huge outdoor area, where a mass drug sale occurs, but for obvious resource reasons this scene was condensed into the supermarket scene of the movie. Selby in the book describes the scene as if “walking through the battlefield of raging engagement and suddenly turning the corner and finding yourself in a demilitarised zone” (219). While there are some minor similarities between the two events, namely the characters being on edge – Harry and Tyrone especially – every other detail has been changed to accommodate the plotline to the medium. While on its own, altering this plotline seems odd considering in the book they actually succeed with their purchase, unlike in this scene in the movie, it makes more sense when put it into context with the following scene.

In the book, it takes a rather long streak of bad luck before the duo – Harry and Tyrone, that is – decide to try their luck down south, in sunny Florida. They realize there is not much more to be done in the Bronx – or Coney Island, in the movie – and should they succeed in buying drugs down south and come back with them, they will have a monopoly on the drugs, meaning they can set the price however high they want. In the movie, they decide to pursue Florida after they see the truck with the “Florida Oranges” logo on it fleeing the scene. Since they are incredibly desperate at this point in the movie, it does not take much convincing for each other to agree to go down south. Aronofsky says in the director’s commentary that the truck was meant as a simple, easy-to-understand solution for the problem of convincing the audience that these two characters would have good reason to travel hundreds of miles for drugs, when at that point they were already almost broke. Since the movie could not afford the longer runtime the book had in portraying events leading up to the Florida storyline, the director opted for this more subtle, but still sensible option (*Requiem*, Aronofsky).

Another rather noticeable alteration is the omission of the good doctor / bad doctor subplot with Sara at the end. In the book version, written about two decades earlier, Sara is subjected to

some of the worst cruelties and inhumanities of the healthcare system imaginable: zero compassion, a lack of caring professionals, and constant verbal and physical abuse from her supposed “caretakers.” In the book, a proper, caring doctor who truly wants what is best for Sara, at that point suffering from amphetamine addiction, is overruled by a superior, who could not care less about Sara’s condition. This is missing from the movie, along with the bit where one of the nurses leaves Sara to sit in her own urine for days after having wetted herself, being powerless to even speak, let alone move. The electroconvulsive therapy plotline, however, stays and makes for an equally, if not more sad fate for the widow. These subplots were supposedly cut for pacing reasons, since at this point the finale is about to unfold, and Aronofsky likely did not want to bog down the plot with this – in the big picture of things – irrelevant plotline. Since unlike the novel’s, the movie’s finale is presented as a kind of amalgamation of the four characters’ storylines, this would have served only to break that coalescing of these final scenes. The editing is set up in a way that shows character after character, with the time between cuts growing less and less, so no unnecessary scenes could have been present at that point, but on this I will elaborate later. While the movie’s sole focus is addiction, the book definitely leans on social commentary as well, using Sara’s story as a conduit, but to be fair, it was written in a rather different time.

I also wanted to briefly touch on the scene leading up to the ending, which I think is a great showcase for how the movie stands on its own two feet, as a standalone work next to the novel. At the very end, all the characters are at their respective rock bottoms: Harry’s arm is amputated in a prison hospital; Tyrone, often the subject of racial abuse, is forced to work in the very same prison Harry is in; Marion is “forced” to participate in orgies – at least should she want to keep shooting up heroin – and Sara is subjected to ECT on a regular basis, as a “treatment” for her condition. But what I wanted to focus on in this section is the constant cutting between the characters. The viewer – and also the character, in a way – expects a cut away from the horrors unfolding before their very eyes. Hoping it was all just a bad dream, but not this time. Aronofsky refuses to cut away. It is a living, waking nightmare. The addicts are denied their escape; they are forced to live in their miserable reality – for which they only have themselves to blame – and the viewer, in turn, is forced to watch. This unification of storylines, as the camera keeps cutting between the four characters, going from misery to agony, is unique to the film, as it is not present in the book in any way. In the novel, each character receives their usual complete chapter, separate physically and metaphorically from the others’, meaning there is no cross-cutting between any of them. I also

think that the film does a better job at hinting at a continuation of the characters' suffering, since this is only the end for the viewer, not for Harry, Marion, Sara, or Tyrone. The movie not only hints at a continuation of the suffering but also draws a kind of parallel between the four subjects. This was the director's vision, and I think it illustrates exceptionally well what addiction has caused to these people. The movie remains faithful in conveying the misery addiction has brought upon them, along with portraying it in its gruesome and horrifying detail, while also making one subtle change. We are told explicitly that Harry lives, which is the opinion of Selby, not Aronofsky, but once again, that plot point serves only to make the ending that much harder to bear. Selby himself said to Aronofsky that the sole reason Harry survives is because his suffering has only just begun, which I think sums up the bleakness of the story and the atmosphere of the story quite well (*Requiem*, Aronofsky).

One omission that I do feel slightly changes the overall story is the removal of the parts where the three friends at the end of the story start withholding drugs from each other. While it could easily be chalked up to runtime or resource problems, I do feel like this is one part of the novel that is sorely missed in the movie. Towards the end, regardless of how good friends they are, eventually, when the circumstances grow dire enough, the three "friends" stop sharing what little portions of drugs they can obtain with the others. It starts out slowly in the novel, after Marion asks Harry not to share "their" share of the drugs with Tyrone, but by the end, everyone holds back from everyone else. While neither does not including this plotline take away from the overall message of the movie, nor does it serve as a source of conflict in the novel, meaning moviegoers do not miss out on much, I still believe this adds another layer to the effects of addictions, as portrayed in Selby's written story. Similarly, the dope fiend in the jail cell preaching to the other inmates is also a noticeable omission, but not one which changes the atmosphere or the message of the movie in any major way. While it is obviously impossible to transpose everything from the novel to the big screen – for a lack of time, mainly – I do feel like this scene would have made for another horrifying example and reference point for drug abuse for the viewers. To be fair, there's plenty more to include, and it is the sole discretion of the director as for what to keep and what to cut.

Scenes for analysis

I have chosen from the movie a couple of specific scenes which I will be analysing and comparing to their matching book counterpart, should there be one. These scenes are, in order of importance: the kitchen scene at Sara's when Harry comes to visit, the finale, Marion's elevator scene, and Sara's cleaning montage. I will talk about the kitchen scene first because it was upon reading this very scene that Aronofsky decided to adapt the book, so I think it is obvious why it is such a paramount scene (*Requiem*, Aronofsky). The finale I chose not only because it is probably the most memorable scene of the movie, but also because it shows how well this adaptation can stand on its own legs, while drawing heavy inspiration from the source material. Marion's scene was chosen because it has several subtle techniques Aronofsky and his crew invented for the purpose of translating Selby's writing techniques. Lastly, I chose Sara's cleaning montage because it is something unique to the film, it was not adapted from the source material; it is an original from the filmmaker. It is also worth noting that this scene is the catalyst of the "end", as it sets in motion Sara's ultimate fate, which is intertwined, at least visually, with the rest of the group.

I think nothing else speaks quite so much to the importance of the kitchen scene as its runtime, clocking in at roughly one-tenth of the entire movie. In comparison, its book equivalent amounts to one-twentieth – so, "half", as compared to the film – of the overall book. The director describes this scene as precisely what the movie is about: "being so close to someone but not being able to say, "I love you", not being able to connect" – so in other words, unsuccessful emotional connections (*Requiem*, Aronofsky). In the novel, Harry goes to visit his mother for the first time after stealing her TV set, as he wants to make amends. He wants to right his wrongs by telling his mother that he had bought her a brand-new TV set, which is Sara's addiction and consequently, escape. Even though everything is going great, and the mother-son duo are finally starting to connect, Harry notices that something is not quite right. Around halfway through the conversation, it hits Harry that his mother is on diet pills, which are amphetamines (commonly known as speed), as he finally realizes what the grinding sounds is – Sara's teeth. Being a junkie, Harry knows exactly what those pills do to people, but obviously he cannot tell her mother how he would know, so he resorts to shouting and an argument breaks out between the two of them. When Sara remembers the phone call about being invited onto national television, Harry calls her sole source of vigour a lie. Sara then has her monologue about how this is the best she has ever felt, and how this television appearance is the only current driving force behind her happiness. Harry then leaves,

after promising to come visit with his girlfriend, Marion, but neither says “I love you” to the other before Harry steps out the door.

Unlike the book version, which is basically one monolithic unit, the movie version is split into three visually distinct parts. The first is the “light side section”, which is then followed by the “dark side section”, ending with the silhouette shot. The light side section obviously refers to the happy part of the conversation, which lasts until Harry makes the realization about why his mother is grinding her teeth, at which point the dark side section takes over. Then, at the end, once Sara stands up from the table – which was never mentioned in the book – the silhouette section begins. Initially, both Harry and Sara are happy. Harry is glad her mother is better than ever and he is happy she forgave him. Sara is overjoyed at hearing about Harry’s new business, and she practically jumps from joy when his son mentions his girlfriend. In his book, Selby described Harry as “whole, at least for a moment” (138). All the while the lighting in the background is white, pure, and innocent, but not for long. At this point, if they are attentive enough, the audience could already have heard some sound cues as to Sara’s condition. Just like in the book, we are told – or rather shown – that Sara has a problem: “Sara nodded, grinning, grinding, clenching” (137). In the movie, however, it is much more subtle, as it is only in the background of the scene, not something made unmissably obvious by the director or the actress, on purpose. Harry soon realizes what is wrong. The camera pans around Harry, switching perspectives. The lighting turns dark, as the conversation sours. All the joy is gone, all the progress the two have made has been for naught. As Harry confronts his mother, the lighting turns darker to indicate a change of mood. Aronofsky himself says that “you can never capture text, you can never capture words”, and so this was their way of trying to illustrate Selby’s description of events (*Requiem*, Aronofsky). In the book, there is no mention whatsoever of any kind of change in lighting, scenery, or anything like that; this is purely a technique made possible by the nature of the medium. It is a neat little trick, subtle yet effective in showing a transition between happiness and discord.

Space is used heavily for storytelling purposes in the scene. Sara stands up from the table, she moves around the room, and even Harry stands up for the silhouette shot. Once again, this is not something taken from the pages of the novel; this is an original idea through and through. The actors occupy the two opposing ends of the screen, thereby being distanced from each other. The important distance, however, is not spatial, but emotional distance, similar to the split screens I mentioned earlier. The emotional boundaries are too much for either character to overcome, and

they fail to meaningfully connect. Harry makes an empty promise to come visit, but it is never fulfilled. Even though there is a hug at the end before Harry leaves, Sara just says “bye son” to Harry as he is already halfway out of the door. There is no “I love you”, there is no emotional connection. The state of mind described by Selby is visible on both Harry’s and Sara’s faces right afterward. Sara stands in the kitchen, motionless: “Sara looked at the door for many minutes, [...] nurturing her feeling of sadness”. Harry sits in a cab, crying: “Harry felt confused and bewildered when he left his mothers” (144-146). Selby’s words are portrayed with the faces and body language of the actors; there is not a single word spoken in the two sequences.

A detail I would also like to mention is a slight alteration made to the source material. In Selby’s novel Harry says “I love you” to his mother, but through an omniscient narrator it is made abundantly clear that their relationship is strained to the brink of collapse. Selby writes: “Harry shook his head as the words and thoughts and feeling bombarded him, increasing his confusion and bewilderment” (144-45). While it might seem like a big change, I do not believe it to substantially alter the scene, as Aronofsky and his actors make it clear throughout the scene that this is neither a healthy, nor a functioning relationship.

My second scene of choice is the grand finale. Probably the most well-known part of the movie, it takes the insanity and sheer horror of the novel and amps it even higher up. As the movie ramps up to its climax, “Meltdown” begins to play. I think it is safe to say the title speaks for itself, as it accompanies some truly horrifying scenes. The most noticeable aspect of the finale is its editing, aside from the music. As the scene progresses, the frequency of the cuts increases. Clocking in around three minutes, it is the culmination of everything in the movie, editing, sound, and cinematography. The cuts are more rapid than ever, sound is louder and more bone-chilling than ever, and the camera is put closer to the characters than ever before. The director says they wanted to see what they could do with the finale, and this ending is the result of that undertaking (*Requiem*, Aronofsky). The characters all meet their book fates: Harry’s arm is amputated, Tyrone is incarcerated alongside Harry, Sara is treated inadequately in a hospital and Marion prostitutes herself for more drugs on the regular.

Two important details I would like to mention is Tyrone’s possible future and Harry’s fate. As I mentioned, we are shown that Harry lives, which was left ambiguous in Selby’s novel. As for Tyrone, the director believes he is the only one who is not too far gone to still have a chance at getting his life together (*Requiem*, Aronofsky). “Merely” incarcerated, not all hope is gone for him,

unlike the others. While far from a happy ending, it is a sheer shiver of hope in an otherwise bleak tragedy.

For Harry, the end is a dream sequence, but this time it is obvious it is not real, thanks to the visuals. In the book, after Harry falls asleep due to the anaesthesia, he has a vivid dream where he is surrounded by a bright, white light. This light is everywhere around him, and after failing to find the source of it, he attempts to escape before everything turns dark. He tries to scream, but no sound comes out of his mouth. After coming to, he realizes his arm has been amputated, and the nurse tries to console him, to no avail. Then, his eyes start getting heavy, which causes Harry to drift into a state of unconsciousness. Selby closes out Harry's passage with the following line, leaving his fate unknown to the reader: "...and get back to the dream of light as he descended into unconsciousness" (275). Overall, the ending is basically the same, which I think is important to mention, since there was pressure on Aronofsky to change it into a happy ending (*Requiem*, Aronofsky). Needless to say, that would have gone completely against what the author originally intended with the story, as he says so in his foreword: "Obviously, I believe that to pursue the American Dream is not only futile, but self-destructive, because ultimately it destroys everything and everyone involved with it" (1). The book has always been about what happens when one chooses to pursue that dream, so changing the ending would have changed the whole point of the story completely.

Harry's dream at the end is also an original idea of the director. His dream has been interpreted by Aronofsky as him once again being on the pier. This time, however, Marion is not there, and Harry falls into the abyss. Having awoken in the hospital, he realizes what happened to him. Then, as he begins crying, the soundtrack "Lux Aeterna", meaning eternal light, begins to play. It is the signature track of the movie, underscoring every important moment. The music ramps up as the characters' ultimate fate is shown, each sadder than the previous, to the audience. These sequences are made up of several close-up shots of the characters, shown in their respective agonies. Eventually, everyone assumes a fetal position before the last scene begins. Then, the movie ends with Sara's last dream, which shows us what she wanted all along. She is on television, looking awe-inspiring in her red dress, Harry is also there, now engaged to Marion, scheduled to wed her in the summer. They tell each other how much they love one another – something that never happens in the story – and then the screen fades to black, and the credits roll in silence.

While in the book Sara also looks as a TV screen as the story ends, this sequence is the brainchild of the director.

Two aspects of the ending I wanted to highlight in particular are the editing style and the cinematography. By cutting between the characters, the movie makes it feel like the audience is being told four fragments of a larger story, not four separate happenings. While the book feels separated, the movie feels conjoined. Neither is better or worse than the other, but it is a noteworthy difference. Also, alongside these cuts the camera is more often placed right in the actors' faces, resulting in close-up shots, making the scenes feel claustrophobic, and the actor's facial expressions the centrepiece of attention. Strobe lights also make several appearances in the finale, indicating physical or emotional distress, of which there is plenty. The finale hits as hard as it does because here everything comes together, in a culmination of all the movie has to offer: writing, directing, acting, sound design and soundtrack, etc.

Another brief, but still very telling example of Aronofsky's techniques is Marion's elevator scene. It stands out as a great example of Aronofsky's adaptation techniques because it contains several in a short amount of time, each working in tandem with the others. In the book, there is nothing special about this scene; it merely describes Marion's disgust of herself, after having slept with her psychologist for drug money, as she leaves the building and goes home. In the movie version, however, we see a glimpse of several of Aronofsky's techniques. Most obviously, the whole scene is shot using a SnorriCam rig, which affixes the camera to the actor, perfectly framing her in the middle. Being a close-up, this already achieves one of the key pillars of Selby's writing, putting the audience close to the character. As she begins her walk towards the elevator, we see the door behind being shut in the distance, but we hear the sound of it as if we were standing right next to the door. This is just one example of dozens of immersive sounds effects from the movie. A variation of the signature track "Lux Aeterna" also begins playing, underscoring Marion's suffering and disgust. Upon entering the elevator, strobe lights can be observed, which indicate physical or emotional suffering, similarly to the phone call scene between the two lovers towards the end of the movie or in Marion's "show" at Big Tim's party. Described by Selby as "anger and disgust building and fighting, her eyes starting to tear" (202), these emotions are conveyed through the music and through the body language and face of Marion. Just as she exits the elevator, she immediately gets sick and throws up outside the hotel. While in the grand scheme of things it might not seem like a special – or even an important – scene, I still wanted to talk in detail about it

because of the little subtleties it contains. The strobe lights, the SnorriCam rig, the overly loud sound effect of the door, the music, all these little things all come together to recreate the illusion of Selby's writing style, but with a camera. While no scene can ever be a one-to-one recreation of a book page, Aronofsky's movie comes as close as humanly possible. The viewer feels the same range of emotions and comes away with the same thoughts as if they have just read this passage from the novel, which is an impressive feat of the director.

While most of my focus has been on the cinematography of the movie, with some emphasis also put on editing and sound design, I now would like to talk about a scene where editing is the key element. The cleaning scene in which Sara cleans her apartment in a montage instantly comes to mind. As I mentioned earlier, editing is one of the most important parts of a movie, and *Requiem* is no exception. By this point we have already had the mailbox montage, where Aronofsky shows us an entire month in a handful of seconds. But with this scene, Aronofsky came up with something truly incredible. Based on a throwaway line by Selby, "and she got her house cleaned in no time at all" (159), Aronofsky created an entire scene in which Sara can be seen cleaning her apartment, top to bottom. While on first glance it might seem like a scene with no impact on the story, it still presents a very important detail about Sara's addiction and addiction in general. The scene begins with a longer-than-usual hip-hop montage, after which we see a clock overlaid on the screen, its hands spinning rapidly. The signature music also starts up, as Sara begins to clean her apartment. Done in an entire day but in merely one take, we see twenty-five seconds of footage showing an entire day pass by (*Requiem*, Aronofsky). In this scene the audience feels and sees what and how Sara feels and sees. While on her pills – speed, that is – everything goes by quick, like a breeze. It is all going fine, right until the pills wear off, at which point the montage, along with Sara's and the viewer's perception of time, slows down. Since Sara cannot accept her sorrowful reality, she must take the only step she can to get her blissful state back. A little while after the timelapse ended, Sara takes another set of pills, then slowly falls asleep, having escaped reality.

The reason I wanted to highlight this scene is because it shows us something that just simply does not work written down on a page. Aronofsky dramatizes the five everyday words "in no time at all" by coming up with a scene which not only shows the audience what Sara is feeling and how distorted her perception of reality is at this point but does it through the lens of the character. Timelapse montages, presented by Aronofsky as a hip-hop montage, can be very effective ways of storytelling, if used correctly, such as in *Requiem*'s case.

Musical score

The movie's soundtrack was composed by Clint Mansell, who was a part of almost every single movie that Aronofsky has ever made, and the Kronos Quartet was hired to perform the score because of their minimalist style. Mansell never imagined how well received the soundtrack would be, even though he and the director had done extensive research, having bought and listened to most of Mozart's requiems (*Requiem*, Aronofsky). I wanted to separately highlight it not only because it fits the theme of the movie so well, which is addiction and thus, repetition, but also because it adds another dimension to the movie. The soundtrack is a huge part of the movie's bleak and hopeless atmosphere, as it underscores almost every key scene in the movie. The key track conveys all the key aspects of the story: sorrow, suffering, pain, etc. Called "Lux Aeterna", it is used as the base for all the important tracks, such as "Summer Overture" or "Hope Overture". The sound design mimics the repetition of an addict, which is evident even after watching just a section of the movie. "Lux Aeterna" is the centre track, of which all other main songs are derived throughout the movie. Even though the main purpose of sound in this movie is to supplement visuals, it adds another emotional layer to the images. While Bluestone calls sound – and as such, music – "ultimately determined by and therefore subservient to the demands of the visual image", that does not mean that music plays a minor role in the movie (57). The music is largely responsible for setting the mood, whether happy or sad, and there are few major moments, if any, in this movie which are not supplemented by music or sound effects.

Both Mansell, the composer, and Brian Emrich, the sound designer, were brought on early during pre-production, which is rather uncommon. According to the duo, this was a large contributor to the quality of their work. Mansell also said the following in an interview to *Vulture Magazine*:

The music is, in the best possible way, heavy-handed. I can imagine more experienced filmmakers sort of going, "Oh, I think it's a bit much," but from our point of view, it was where we were at the time. And I think that's the beauty of it. We didn't have any experience at what we were doing, so we were just guided by what we liked and what worked for us.

Just like the story – or rather, the characters – the music uses repetition to elicit a response. Even the shorter, minor tracks in the soundtrack follow the same scheme, such as "Crimin' and Dealin'", which is often used during montages. While these songs in and of themselves do not

provide near enough, when coupled with the visuals of the movie they make for truly harrowing scenes. The movie achieves its atmosphere through the use of all its techniques and tools combined, with each having their specific role, music very much included. With the invention of sound in movies, to quote Bluestone, “came a new dimension and new possibilities for selection” (29). Many – the composer included – consider the soundtrack to be one of the most influential parts of the movie’s atmosphere and for good reason. Twenty years later, the crown jewel of the soundtrack, “Lux Aeterna”, still lives on. Still heard in sports games, trailers, and advertisements, the song has enjoyed a vivid afterlife. In an interview with *Vulture Magazine* the director described his film as “monster movie”, with “Lux Aeterna” being the monster’s theme (Willmore). Being the leitmotif of the movie, the song has enjoyed a much longer afterlife than its creator ever thought it would. He said in an interview to *Vice*: “[the song has] gone on to have a life of its own” (Makalintal). Having been remixed numerous times, and used as the base for numerous other songs, “Lux Aeterna” is still relevant two decades after the movie came out. While words can hardly do pictures, let alone sound or music justice, there is a very good reason why *Requiem*’s soundtrack has enjoyed the reception it has.

Conclusion

While a movie’s success is determined by many factors, one could hardly make a case that *Requiem for a Dream* was not a successful movie, whether in its own right as a standalone movie or as a novel adaptation. Selby might say that. for him, success of the movie depended on the movie being as true to the words of his book as possible. Aronofsky might say that for him, success of the movie depended on the critic reviews over at *Rotten Tomatoes* and *Metacritic*. Jared Leto (Harry) and Ellen Burstyn (Sara) might say that, for them, success of the movie depended on whether they were nominated for an Academy Award. The studio might say that, for them, success of the movie depended on the gross profit it made. Everyone has their own definition of success, but *Requiem* is movie which fulfils everyone’s criteria for success. From critics, the movie has a “certified fresh” rating on Rotten Tomatoes, and a score of sixty-eight on Metacritic (*Requiem*, Metacritic). The former means that at least 80 critics have awarded it a score of 75% or higher, the latter means that critics have rated the movie a 68/100. From audiences, the movie has a Metacritic user score of 8.8 out of 10, based on 850+ reviews, 8.3 stars out of 10 from over 825 thousand reviews on IMDb (*Requiem*, IMDb), and a 93% audience score from over 250 thousand reviewers

on Rotten Tomatoes (*Requiem*, Rotten). Moreover, the movie was also a financial success, making around twice the money spent on creating it. While far from a box-office success, since seven million dollars was not exactly the hallmark of the widely successful movie even in 2000, the movie was also the furthest thing from a mass-appeal family film (*Requiem*, The Numbers). While the author is just one member of the overall people connected to the film, I still believe it to be one of the biggest achievements of the movie that Aronofsky together with his cast and crew were able to create a movie which made Selby cry tears of joy at the film's premiere at the Cannes Film Festival (Willmore). Though the author does not have the final say – some might say he has not any kind of say at all – over whether an adaptation of their work passes as faithful or not, I still think that by pleasing him, a director must have done at least an alright job, if not better.

Requiem is the perfect example for a movie where the stars aligned, and everything came together in perfect harmony. Aronofsky and Selby came up with the script together, and it shows through the writing of the film how emotional the story they created is. The acting in the movie is second to none, evidenced by Ellen Burstyn's nomination for an Academy Award (Best Actress in a Leading Role), and that is not to say that the others, whether Jared Leto, Jennifer Connolly, or Marlon Wayans, did not contribute their share. The cinematography of the movie, created by Matthew Libatique, makes for a harrowing and claustrophobic experience, not dissimilar to what Selby had in mind when he wrote the book. The original soundtrack, composed by Clint Mansell and performed by the Kronos Quartet, has basically entered the public consciousness and gone on to live a life of its own, known as the haunting soundtrack of *Requiem*, with "Lux Aeterna" at its helm. The editing, thanks to Jay Rabinowitz – after whom the pawnbroker in the beginning is named – enhances the film's atmosphere, and when combined with the cinematography, gives the audience a better look into the everyday life of an addict.

It would be an understatement to say that this film works only because all of its individual parts work. Right off the start, Aronofsky made sure to mimic all of Selby's subtle little techniques, whether it is the SnorriCam used to bring the characters closer to the viewers, whether it is the lack of filters which ensures that dream sequences are inseparable from regular scenes, or whether it is the unconventional editing and cinematographic style of the movie which are together responsible for its claustrophobic and disturbing effect. The hip-hop montage deserves its own, separate mention, mainly because of its effects. Its repetitive aspect, in conjunction with its divisive aspect of separating scenes where substance abuse takes place, truly elevates this movie above the run-

of-the-mill junkie movies. The music further contributes to the atmosphere of the movie, amplifying the graphic images which truly convey the story in an authentic eye, leaving out no detail.

I also think that in no small part the film owes much of its success to its lack of conventions, whether we talk about the lack of a happy ending, a flawed and unlikeable protagonist, or its bleaker than usual atmosphere. It definitely took an exceptional cast and crew to adopt the book as masterfully as they did, but it must also be mentioned that the story – even in movie form – works as well as it does because the original writing, done by Selby, makes for the polar opposite of an everyday story, something we do not see too often.

Works Cited

- Aronofsky, Darren. Director's Commentary. *Requiem for a Dream (Director's Cut)*. Artisan Entertainment, 2001.
- Bergson, Henri-Louis. *Time and Free Will: An Essay on the Immediate Data of Consciousness*. Translated by F. L. Pogson, GRAY RABBIT Publishing, 2019.
- Bluestone, George. *Novels into Film*. Univ. of California Pr., 1961.
- Jakobson, Roman. "On Linguistic Aspects of Translation". *On Translation*, edited by Reuben Arthur Brower, Cambridge, MA and London, England: Harvard University Press, 2013, pp. 232-239. <https://doi.org/10.4159/harvard.9780674731615.c18> Accessed 28 June 2022
- "Darren Aronofsky." *IMDb*, IMDb.com, www.imdb.com/name/nm0004716/. Accessed 28 June 2022
- "Darren Aronofsky." *Wikipedia*, Wikimedia Foundation, 10 June 2022, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Darren_Aronofsky. Accessed 28 June 2022
- "Hubert Selby Jr.." *Wikipedia*, Wikimedia Foundation, 12 June 2022, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hubert_Selby_Jr. Accessed 28 June 2022
- Makalintal, Bettina. "How the 'Requiem for a Dream' Song Became the Default Sound of Epic Drama." *VICE*, 6 Oct. 2020, <https://www.vice.com/en/article/4ayj5j/requiem-for-a-dream-theme-song-lux-aeterna-sound-of-epic-drama>. Accessed 28 June 2022
- Mueller, Annie. "Why Movies Cost so Much to Make." *Investopedia*, Investopedia, 21 Sept. 2021, <https://www.investopedia.com/financial-edge/0611/why-movies-cost-so-much-to-make.aspx>. Accessed 28 June 2022
- Pudovkin Vsevolod Illarionovič. *Film Technique and Film Acting: The Cinema Writings of V.I. Pudovkin*. Vision Press, 2019
- Requiem for a Dream*. Directed by Darren Aronofsky, performances by Ellen Burstyn, Jared Leto, Jennifer Connelly and Marlon Wayans, director's cut, Artisan Entertainment, 2001
- "Requiem for a Dream." *IMDb*, IMDb.com, 15 Dec. 2000, www.imdb.com/title/tt0180093/?ref_=nv_sr_srs_g_0. Accessed 28 June 2022
- "Requiem for a Dream." *Metacritic*, 6 Oct. 2000, <https://www.metacritic.com/movie/requiem-for-a-dream>. Accessed 28 June 2022
- "REQUIEM FOR A DREAM." *Rotten Tomatoes*, 2000, 26 November 2021, www.rottentomatoes.com/m/requiem_for_a_dream. Accessed 28 June 2022

Selby, Hubert. *Requiem for a Dream*. Open Road Media, 2011.

Squire, Jason E. *The Movie Business Book: Second Edition*. Simon & Schuster, 2001.

Thomas, Kevin. "A Bleak and Brilliant 'Requiem'." *Los Angeles Times*, Los Angeles Times, 20 Oct. 2000, www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-2000-oct-20-ca-39148-story.html. Accessed 28 June 2022

Willmore, Alison. "An Oral History of Requiem for a Dream." *Vulture*, 16 Oct. 2020, www.vulture.com/article/an-oral-history-of-requiem-for-a-dream.html. Accessed 28 June 2022