



ESSE-8: LONDON 2006

29 August – 2 September 2006

S15. New Directions in Literature and Film in the Twenty-first Century

Wednesday 30 August: 9.30-11.30am

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Literary adaptation in the twenty-first century, focussing on studies of adaptation today, concentrating on case studies, theoretical developments, or on wider issues such as the transformation of the heritage film over the past decade, audiences, pleasure, genre, marginality, nostalgia or intertextuality. It is hoped that the seminar will allow us to reflect on whether the boundaries between literary and film studies are being redrawn, and if the idea of “adaptation” to describe this textual exchange remains as central as it once was.

Children’s Literature on Screen

Deborah Cartmell (De Montfort University)

Screen adaptation, on one level, grows out of the longstanding tradition of *ut pictura poesis*, a tradition that reflects on the mutual dependency and admiration of painting and literature. But where there is dependency and admiration, there is also incompatibility and jealousy. In the field of adaptation, the tension between the literary and the screen text is, possibly, most prominent in the area of children’s texts, where concerns over film’s moral influence and the threat to literacy have been prevalent since the inception of cinema. As George Bluestone observed, the relationship between literature and film is simultaneously ‘overtly compatible’ and ‘secretly hostile’; and, accordingly, this paper will examine the competing, often overtly hostile relationship between children’s literature and film by making explicit this implicit antagonism. This paper will survey film adaptations of ‘classic’, ‘obscure’ and ‘popular’ children’s writing, from Lewis Carroll to J.K. Rowling, reflecting on how, when it comes to adaptations of children’s literature, the battle between film and literature seems to be at its most ferocious.

Gazing at Novels: Gendered Re-visions of Nineteenth Century Fiction

Anna Despotopoulou (University of Athens)

This paper will attempt to examine the feminist undercurrent in film adaptations such as Patricia Rozema’s *Mansfield Park* and Jane Campion’s *The Portrait of a Lady*, as opposed to other contemporary adaptations by male directors, namely Douglas McGrath (*Emma*),

Merchant-Ivory (*The Golden Bowl*), and more recently Joe Wright (*Pride and Prejudice*), through the lens of feminist film theory and postmodernism, suggesting that the 19th century novel provides alternative filmmakers with opportunities of addressing contemporary problematics concerning gender and sexuality. Such films defy our expectations by challenging the position of the male viewer and by creating a space for the female spectator.

The Passion Translated: Literary and Cinematic Rhetoric in *Pride and Prejudice* (from 1995 to 2005)

Roberta Grandi (Catholic University of Milan)

This study will highlight how rhetorical devices and stylistic techniques are employed both in the novel *Pride and Prejudice* and in its film adaptations to transform and mitigate the destabilizing power of passion. The use of tropes, such as synecdoche and metonymy, and of the stylistic technique of focalization, finds its effective counterpart in the filmic grammar that includes close-ups, insert shots, subjective shots, eyeline matches and reaction shots. The direct correspondence between the literary devices chosen by Jane Austen and the visual equivalents employed by the cinema will be elaborated.

Original Renewal

Monika Seidl (University of Vienna)

In my paper I would like to realign various ideas prevailing in different fields, such as philosophy, literary and cultural theory and critical linguistics, to develop a new model to explain the fundamental nature of the filmic adaptation of a literary classic. This involves examining not only the connection between the source text and the adaptation but also has to take into account the performative and iterative effectiveness of a classic. Within a cultural studies framework, the model presented draws on a range of different concepts in the humanities, and adapts them so that they can be applied to certain specific questions like: What is an adaptation of a classic? How does the historical moment of an adaptation itself create meaning in the source text? How can “source text” be conceptualised? What is an “original”, after all? And what, indeed, is a classic?

“Colliding Intertexts: The Case of Sam Shepard’s *Fool for Love* vs. Robert Altman’s movie version”

Gabriella Varró (University of Debrecen)

The paper I hope to contribute to the seminar aims to discuss and re-problematize issues of adaptation by focusing on a single dramatic piece and its movie adaptation, namely Sam Shepard’s *Fool for Love* and its reinterpretation on celluloid by Robert Altman. Although Shepard’s original play was first staged in San Francisco’s Magic Theatre on 8 February, 1983, and Robert Altman’s movie version followed within two years, still I hope to argue that this specific adaptation case holds various lessons for contemporary research on adaptation.

The proposed essay reveals how despite the surface similarities between the theatrical and filmic medium adaptation becomes problematic in specific instances of adaptation. There are four important areas where shifts from the original Shepard play make the

movie adaptation profoundly unfaithful to the initial authorial aims. I hope to call these examples of interference between the dramatic and the filmic medium collisions of intertexts. The paper will illustrate these collisions by focusing on the movie's interpretation of: 1. setting and space; 2. protagonists; 3. the mysteries; 4. the notion of immediacy. In conclusion the presentation will briefly state the lessons adaptation theory might draw from such examples.

On Filming Metafiction: John Fowles and Filmmaking

Gerd Bayer (University of Erlangen)

This paper investigates which strategies Fowles applies in order to produce appropriate cinematic equivalents for his metafictional texts. In the filmed versions of his novels, for instance, cinematic and diegetic frames replicate the complex narrative situations of his novels. As a case study, this paper will provide a detailed analysis of both the original text and the filmed version of Fowles's unpublished short story "The Last Chapter" (1970). I will show that, in the different versions of the story and in Fowles's cooperation with the film's script writer, metafictional and metacinematic structures are of key importance.

Cultural Appropriation in Shakespearean Cinema

Anne-Marie Costantini-Cornède (University of Paris 5)

This presentation means to handle filmic transcultural approaches to Shakespeare's plays. Akira Kurosawa's *Ran* (1985), belongs to the genre of the *Jidai-Geki* or historical film. It sets the action in medieval Japan during the *Sendoku Jidai*, an age torn by violent wars among lords. Fictive features and real historical details are combined: hence bloody Hidetora Ichimonji is both Lear and legendary Lord Motonari Mori. Abela's *Makibefo/Macbeth* (1999) is set in nowadays Madagascar and shot with mere fishermen as actors. Such adaptations enhance the universal dimension of Shakespeare's world. They represent a narrative and aesthetic remoulding of plays: strategies of displacements, character suppressions, unfolding or dialogues simplifications are meant to use visual mode and cinematic rhetoric at their most.