

Introduction

In the opening article of this volume, Thomas **Leitch** offers a critique of a recently published and controversial collection of essays on adaptation studies, Colin MacCabe, Kathleen Murray and Rick Warner's (eds.) *True to the Spirit: Film Adaptation and the Question of Fidelity* (OUP, 2011). Finding many glaring omissions and erroneous assumptions about adaptation study there, Leitch sees this as an opportune moment for a stock-take of the field of adaptation studies as it actually is, which includes asking if the much-beleaguered subject area fulfils what he considers to be the essential criteria of an academic discipline. As such, the essay provides the general reader with a useful map of the field, including what one might call its foundational debates. On the great fidelity debate, for example, which, it is claimed, haunts adaptation studies, catching it in a nefarious binary from which it valiantly tries to but cannot escape, Leitch's essay exposes much tilting at windmills here, suggesting that the field is not so much haunted by the fidelity question than that the *arrière-garde* of criticism is seeing ghosts. The crucial matter of film and literary studies' attitude to the young pretender discipline of adaptation studies is also addressed – crucial because it marks the intellectual politics in many institutions, in turn, perhaps, explaining the attitude of some criticism. The article proposes that, rather than seeing it as an intruder, we see adaptation studies as provocatively useful, a kind of benign and beneficial trespasser, an impulse transecting and reinvigorating the various disciplines upon whose 'territory' it seems to encroach. Leitch also articulates the specific burdens that face the adaptation studies scholar, who must ever "make it new," and has to be a keen amateur of many non-native fields and their idioms. In addition to the article's clarification of the somewhat pernicious position in which the "anti-discipline" of adaptation studies finds itself, it also propounds and practices, by way of moving things forward from redundant and reductive debates, a productive paradigm of scholarship that might also fruitfully be adopted by many other disciplines: adaptation studies as a communicating, interconnected (inter- or trans-) disciplinary network that is, if not utterly democratic, then aware of its own inclusionary and exclusionary practices and their consequences. Emphasizing the importance of ongoing vibrant dialogue to any would-be discipline, the article criticizes the MacCabe volume's refusal to engage with adaptation scholarship as it actually is, but this criticism is deliberately productive, reopening discourse where it had been closed off. This willingness to (re)engage is precisely Leitch's point, and places his article in counter-point to the approaches with which he takes issue here.

Continuing the vigorous debate that, according to Leitch's typography, is one of the hallmarks of a discipline's establishment, Graham **Allen's** contribution argues against a practice of adaptation studies that he sees as concentrating excessively on "the critical enumeration and analysis of kinds of adaptive practice," recommending instead an approach that sees all texts, both "originals" and their adaptations

(“adaptative texts”), as well, indeed, as analytical texts, as intertexts. By “reviving our perception of the intertextual nature of the intertext,” Allen argues, we are forced beyond purely metatextual investigations and their failed attempts at categorization, and into acts of interpretation. The analyst, according to this scheme, is no longer a “metacommentator on generic kinds of adaptation practice,” but an “interpreter of a shifting, unstable intertext.” As an example of this approach, according to which “adaptative texts” are read as existing in an unfixed triadic (or indeed, presumably, tetradic, pentadic, hexadic, and so on and so forth) interpretative relationship with one another, Allen offers a reading of the tetrad Burgess, Kubrick (*A Clockwork Orange*), Beethoven, and Shelley (*Prometheus Unbound* and *The Triumph of Life*), tracing for us a network of intertextual linkages that are brought to light by specific interpretative acts. This approach, Allen suggests, offers a corrective to a blind-spot in adaptation studies, namely the tacit insistence on, if not an original, then a kind of ground-zero anchor text “upon which the adaptational activity is founded.” Allen’s suggestion of a *blind-spot* in the practice of adaptation study is particularly interesting in the context of Leitch’s reference to *panoptic* disciplines which “internalize what Foucault has called ‘the power of the Norm’ and so police their own, and each others’ discourse,” and which he distinguishes from a network model of disciplinary activity that “attaches greater importance to the questions – some perhaps foundational and enduring, others ever-changing – that drive the conversation that keeps the network humming,” and which, Leitch suggests, is an appropriate paradigm for a discipline such as adaptation studies which “emphasizes the relations among different texts above features specific to the texts themselves,” and therefore seems to have “obvious affinities to a network model of disciplinary authority.”

Siobhán **Donovan**’s analysis of a performance of Alban Berg’s “Literaturoper” [literature opera / literary opera] *Wozzeck*, and of a recording of that performance for television, reveals that, despite Berg’s claims of fidelity for himself and for future productions, a complex network of intertexts are at work in this piece: the Frankfurt production directed by Peter Mussbach is shown to be an intertext that sometimes refers back to the Büchner ‘original’ (itself based on a true story, as well as liberally overwritten by overzealous editors), and sometimes takes its direction from Berg’s libretto choices (his restructuring of the sequence of the source text is read here as a pragmatic adaptation demanded by the parameters of the opera genre), but also is forced to make its own new interventions as required by the medium of television. Donovan’s analysis shows the curious mixture of fidelity and innovation required to remain “true” to core ideas as they are transposed across time and into different media. The analysis also reveals that even the simple act of recording a performance for television does not achieve the 1:1 fidelity we might imagine, as the act of framing as well as the addition of visual effects constitute adaptive interventions.

Taking the example of Matthias Müller’s film *Nebel* (2000), based on a poetry cycle by Austrian poet Ernst Jandl, Stefanie **Orphal** turns to a topic that is, she

suggests, often overlooked in adaptation studies: the adaptation of poetry into or in film. Rather than applying unproductive and outmoded ideas of fidelity, Orphal suggests that a more fruitful approach is offered by examining the interaction between the poem – which is often fully integrated into filmic adaptations – and the audio-visual techniques that film employs. This, she argues, expands the concept of adaptation in a way that might productively be adopted in the study of more traditional cases of literature-to-film adaptation, as it breaks away from various binary oppositions that have dominated the analysis of adaptations in the past.

In the context of the anti-war film genre, Christiane **Schönfeld** looks at two adaptations of Manfred Gregor's autobiographical novel *Die Brücke* (1958), the story of a group of boys who, at the end of the Second World War, are ordered to defend a bridge in their home town, in the course of which defence most of them are killed. The two films enjoyed very different degrees of critical success: Bernhard Wicki's 1959 film, considered to be one of the best anti-war films ever made, met with both national and international acclaim, while the 2008 television production by Wolfgang Panzer was robustly criticized and then largely forgotten. Schönfeld seeks to explain this by examining the processes of adaptation in each case, paying close attention to the way in which the two directors frame their shots. While Wicki uses close-ups to emphasize the violence experienced by the young boys, thereby giving clear visual expression to the film's anti-war stance, Panzer uses close-ups and music in a much more conventional way, making the events on screen more comfortably digestible for the audience, resulting, ultimately, in *Kitsch*.

Ates **Gürpınar** expands the concept of adaptation in an article that looks at Sergej Eisenstein's notes on a possible film adaptation of Karl Marx' *Das Kapital*, and Alexander Kluge's film *Nachrichten aus der ideologischen Antike: Marx – Eisenstein – Das Kapital*. Rather than viewing adaptation as the transfer of a particular subject matter or material into a different medium, Gürpınar focuses on the adaptation of the forms conventionally used by the receiving medium to accommodate the forms of the medium in which the work originated. In the case of Marx' *Kapital*, this resulted, he argues, in attempts by both Eisenstein and Kluge to create a filmic language adapted to the scientific language and methods employed in Marx' work.

Andreas **Musolff's** contribution analyses the 1940 propaganda film *Der ewige Jude* through the lens of "conceptual blending theory," a version of cognitive metaphor theory developed by Mark Turner and Gilles Fauconnier according to which concepts are viewed as "input spaces" which can combine (as at times incongruous elements) to form an entirely new conceptual whole. Musolff sees a blending of this kind at work in *Der ewige Jude* which merges what are in themselves not innocuous but certainly individually less lethal ideas into a devastating new entity, and one which, cunningly, shifts final interpretative and, with it, moral responsibility onto the film's audience. The only inference the film allows, Musolff argues, if one accepts the individual elements used in the blend, is the inevitability of a Final Solution. So, although the "film left no doubt about what

the Nazis were planning for the Jews, [...] the responsibility for ‘accepting’ this knowledge was left to the spectators.” The “input spaces” or individual elements involved here (the long-standing anti-Semitic trope of Jews as parasites, and Hitler’s January 1939 prophecy of Jewish extermination in the event of a war, an eventuality that at the time of the film’s release had come about) are re-contextualized and blended, as well as presented in a specific order that portrays “the mass murder of all European Jews [...] as a ‘natural’ solution and as the coming-into-being of the Führer’s prediction without spelling it out literally.”

Claudia **Buffagni** takes a socio-linguistic approach in her examination of the 1965 film adaptation of the novel *Das Kaninchen bin ich* (1963) by East German author Manfred Bieler. Both the novel and the film (the screenplay of which was written by Bieler in collaboration with DEFA-co-founder and director Kurt Maetzig) were banned in the GDR. Buffagni argues that this rejection by GDR-authorities was a result of specific features in the speech of the main characters which suggested a social identity at odds with what was considered acceptable by the prevailing political system. While Buffagni identifies similar features in the speech of the main characters in both the novel and the film, the film, she argues, uses media-specific means to create a sense of immediacy and authenticity that further emphasizes the ultimately critical nature of the discourse, and thereby manages to circumnavigate to a certain extent the various deletions and changes demanded by party officials.

Bernadette **Cronin’s** contribution looks at the special case in adaptation studies presented by postdramatic theatre, a theatre that departs from the conventions of traditional drama and in which “staged text (*if* text is staged) is merely a component with equal rights in a gestic, musical, visual, etc., total composition,” to borrow Hans-Thies Lehmann’s definition. Cronin takes the example of *POLA*, a stage production based on the short story “Pola” by Polish author and journalist Hanna Krall, which in turn was based on the real life and death of Apolonia Machczyńska, murdered by members of the infamous Reserve Police Battalion 101 for having hidden persecuted Jews under the floorboards of her home in Lublin. Created by a team of collaborators at the Projekttheater Studio, Vienna, this “devised performance,” while based on other texts, including Beckett’s dance or movement piece for television, the “Fernsehballert” *Quad* or *Quadrat 1+2*, and foregroundedly intertextual to the point that the *Ur*-text is actually pasted to the walls of the performance space, uses the devices of postdramatic theatre to enact its main concerns, which include Austria’s refusal to confront its National Socialist past. Cronin’s examination of this performative adaptation of Krall’s “Pola,” which eschews ideas of audience-performer separation as well as directorial and authorial authority, reveals the transpositions involved in the process of staging a prose piece, transpositions demanded by the specificities of different media as well as by the non-hierarchical, collaborative and experimental impulses central to postdramatic theatre production.

Nadine **Nowroth's** contribution analyses the documentary play *Staats-Sicherheiten* (2008) in which former political prisoners from the GDR tell their stories, and the film version of the play produced for German television in the wake of the play's enormous success. As both productions are based on the narratives of contemporary witnesses, using, for example, material previously published in the autobiography of one of the prisoners, Nowroth applies the concept of 'remedialization' – the re-use of already mediated stories and narratives in a new medium – in her analysis, investigating how media-specific features and techniques in the two productions allow the construction of authenticity and, thus, a re-enactment of history.

Una **Carthy's** contribution to the volume's General Contributions section discusses the findings of a two-phase study carried out in Letterkenny Institute of Technology to establish actual student attitudes towards language learning in an institutional environment which, contrary to overwhelming evidence demonstrating the importance of languages to the economy, increasingly saw language learning as low priority and an unpopular subject choice. While the majority of students surveyed did at first seem disinclined to study languages, further investigation in the form of semi-structured interviews found that students actually saw the value of foreign language competence, but were discouraged by negative experiences of language learning in secondary school and by a lack of awareness about the foreign study and work placement options available to them. The study therefore also sheds some light on the relatively low numbers of Irish students who avail of international mobility programmes compared to other European countries.

Antje **Hartje's** article compares the works of W.B. Yeats and Stefan George, proposing a method of 'understanding' their hermetic poetry, poems that replicate the incantatory quality of prayers, and in which formal, structural elements become the meaning-carriers, imparting their content to an initiated group of "worshippers" at the altar of aestheticism by visceral as opposed to cognitive appeal. Applying a modified form of reader-response theory allows, Hartje claims, the strategic gaps in these works to be "read."

A selection of papers from the Women in German Studies (WiGS) conference 2012, hosted by University College Dublin, will be published in the thematic section of the next volume of *Germanistik in Ireland* (volume 8, 2013). For this issue, we are delighted to welcome on board as guest co-editor Gillian Pye of University College Dublin. As always, articles on other subjects are also welcome for the General Contributions section.

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Rachel MagShamhráin and Sabine Strümper-Krobb (editors)