

Against Adaptation: Toward Transdisciplinarity and Minor Cinema

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Abstract

Over the past decades, the field adaptation studies has been trying to break new grounds and escape the confines of the predominant fidelity discourse. This thesis wants to propose new perspectives that have been widely underrepresented, at least in the Anglo-American context, drawing attention to the great relevance to adaptation of the writings of French critical thinkers, most notably Gilles Deleuze and his two-volume publication on cinema and Jacques Rancière and his continuation/reevaluation of Deleuze's film-related concepts. Without directly addressing questions of adaptation, the way both philosophers think about cinema is inseparable from their thinking about literature and indeed about other arts and media, exemplifying new transdisciplinary approaches to adaptation this thesis hopes to encourage.

Even though it might seem counterintuitive, considering the efforts of adaptation studies to cut the roots it has grown within literary departments, I chose three Shakespearean adaptations for the case studies as I believe that such focus will enable us to see more clearly the significance of interstices as much as of the links the films form with the text. Jean-Luc-Godard's *King Lear*, Orson Welles's *Chimes at Midnight* and Akira Kurosawa's *Ran* not only represent the kind of cinema that Deleuze and Guattari would call minor for their destabilizing effect on the dominant, the major, be it big production companies, Shakespeare's language, or a literary text in general; they also exemplify what we could call anti-adaptations in the way they engage with as much as

they resist the adapted text.

With the assistance of the writings of André Bazin, Deleuze, and Rancière and a selection of relevant films, the thesis addresses some of the key questions the complex nature of which tends to be underrated within adaptation studies. These include media specificity, which Deleuze links primarily to the relations art forms can enter in with thought, or film's essential heterogeneity, which Rancière identifies as one of the main sources of the "gaps of cinema." From Deleuze's assertion of film as non-linguistic material, to his concept of falsifying narration in which truth becomes undecidable, to Rancière's cinematic 'thwarting', an elaboration on Jean Epstein's statement that cinema is true and a story is a lie, we arrive at a gap that lies at the core of adaptation: the interstice between the cinema that has taken over the art of narrative from literature, and the cinema that has the unique ability to record reality and that once had the ambition of becoming an abstract 'writing with light.' The thesis finally re-poses some crucial questions in light of the reevaluation of film/adaptation as the time-space for inter-art relations.