

TEACHING SCREENWRITING AS TRANSLATION AND ADAPTATION: CRITICAL REFLECTIONS – ©2021 P

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Abstract

This chapter discusses teaching screenwriting in terms of translation and adaptation. Since translation and adaptation scholars often use both terms interchangeably to signify semiosis or culture, section one suggests some more specific working definitions. Realigning terminology with everyday language, translation is redefined as an invariance-based phenomenon while adaptation is reconceived as a variance-based phenomenon, which entails better fit. More specific working definitions help at once specifying what one could be teaching or learning in more precise terms.

Definitional issues involve conceptual and epistemic boundaries, which stakeholders use to defend their interests. This ushers in section two, which discusses the current Western Romantic view on art and culture, and how having driven a rift between art and craft, it opposes the aforesaid conceptual boundaries, and disparages screenwriting, translation, and adaptation, lest they comply with the Romantic rule. Suggestions follow to re-open the Romantic view to its pre-Romantic stance, and to revalue both art and craft values in screenwriting, translation and adaptation.

Section three concludes with some caveats. Since it took Romanticism half a millennium to form and segregate its proper socio-cultural and economical tribes, nudging it back to its wider pre-Romantic views is not likely to succeed in the near future.

0. INTRODUCTION

The writing of this chapter started with a two-word assignment: "teaching adaptation". When appearing in a handbook on screenwriting, "adaptation" typically means literary film or TV adaptation. As such, it represents the subject matter of literary film adaptation studies (henceforth LFAS).¹ Since most film and TV adaptations are based on a screenplay, the topic touches screenwriting studies as well. However, so far LFAS has shown little interest in screenwriting, and screenwriting studies focusing on adaptation have also remained scarce (see, e.g., Sherry 2014, 87–88). While teaching screenwriting has built a tradition since the 1910s (see, e.g., Curran 2015), lit-film scholars acknowledge that so far they have not yet developed models on how to teach (literary film) adaptation (see, e.g., Cutchins, Raw, and Welsh 2010, xiv; Leitch 2010, 1; Cartmell and Whelehan 2014; Cobb 2014, 11; Sherry 2014, 87). Different critics suggest different explanations for this situation. Introducing their *The Pedagogy of Adaptation*, Cutchins et al. (2010, xiv) state that teaching is about "repeatable processes", while (literary film) adaptations are "more of an art than a repeatable process" (ibid.). Hence, the editors suggest that teaching adaptation cannot be "broken down into bite-sized steps", and conclude that the "only legitimate response to art is more art." On the other hand, Jamie Sherry (2014, 87) claims that

The lack of attention to the teaching of *processes* of adapting can be seen as a more general tendency to overlook the many useful theoretical and creative functions of adaptation studies methodologies beyond comparative case-study analysis.

A serious discussion on teaching adaptation in screenwriting meets with more challenges than one essay can handle. By way of introduction, this chapter discusses two obstacles that hinder such a debate. Section one deals with some definitional issues: How does one define adaptation? (How) Is it different from other types of text processing, such as translation for example? The question about translation may surprise in a handbook on screenwriting, but it emerges when translation and adaptation scholars use both terms interchangeably. This raises yet another question: What is one teaching more exactly? Subsequently, what follows heeds Sherry's advice and looks at some more recent and less recent adaptation studies for heuristic tools that could help this debate move forward.

Section two discusses the Romantic view on art and culture, and how it limits rather than broadens options to assess screenwriting in terms of translation and adaptation. Suggestions follow to re-open the Romantic view to its pre-Romantic stages.

Section three concludes with some caveats foreshadowing resistance against the proposals made in this essay.

¹ When for practical reasons, I hereafter only mention film, I intend TV and media studies to be included. For the same practical reasons, I hereafter use LFAS and "lit-film studies" interchangeably, even though not all lit-film studies investigate interactions between literature and media in adaptational terms.

I. DEFINITIONAL ISSUES

Both "translation" and "adaptation" represent common parlance terms, which in everyday language point to relatively distinct sets of phenomena. However, when academics claimed these words for scholarly purposes, confusion set in: translation meant also adaptation, and adaptation included translation.

Defining translation and adaptation

Laypeople as well as professional translators and academics working outside the field of translation studies typically define "translation" as *the accurate rendition of the meaning of a verbal expression in another natural language*. Even if the word is used in a metaphorical sense, people still tend to distinguish it from translation "proper" (see, e.g., Jakobson 1959; van Doorslaer 2020, 1). However, when post-modernism also hit literary translation studies in the late 1970s, some ambitious literary scholars have inflated the common parlance concept "translation", first to include all intertextual types of processing (e.g. adaptation, parody, periodization, modernization, etc.) and make it synonymous with intertextuality; then to step beyond the linguistic paradigm and become synonymous with "culture" (see, e.g., Trivedi 2007) or "semiosis" (see, e.g., Steiner 1975; Torop 2002; Gorlée 2007; Marais and Kull 2016). Today translation scholars study translation as any intersemiotic and multimodal type of verbalization (see, e.g., Kress and Van Leeuwen 2001; O'Halloran 2008), and include also cross-medial phenomena such as audiovisual translation, audio-description, etc.

"Adaptation" also represents a common parlance term, which typically means *change that obtains or maintains relevance*. When a football team is losing against its opponent, it will have to adapt its strategy, and when a square peg needs to fit a round hole, one will have to adapt either one or the other. However, as indicated above, lit-film scholars have claimed the term to study screen representations of literary texts. Traditionally, they have translationalized the common parlance concept of adaptation and understood it as *the more or less faithful screen representation of a (preferably canonical) literary text*. In other words, they have conceived of adaptation as *(more or less) free translation*, where "translation" is understood in its common parlance sense as *the accurate rendition of the meaning of an expression*, and "free" is assessed in translational rather than adaptational terms, i.e. based on source (con)text-related conditions of fidelity or accuracy rather than on target (con)text-based requirements of "better fit".² This is not to say that film adaptations have not been studied in cinematic terms; only that the word "free" looks "backwards", not "forwards". Interestingly, in common parlance, adaptation is neither more nor less free than translation, only determined by different (rather than opposed) conditioners; and if adaptation means "free" translation, then what is "free" adaptation?

As film and media studies evolved into legitimate disciplines of their own, lit-film studies has evolved into a direction similar to the one described above with respect to TS: first, the (in)fidelity debate has opened the translational view on adaptation and inflated the

² In fact, a more thorough comparative study of AS and TS might show that for decades, translation scholars have adopted a more adaptational stance when studying translation than many (e.g. fidelity-oriented) lit-film scholars have when studying a translationalized conception of adaptation.

intertextual subcategory adaptation to comprise every type of text processing, including translation, parody, etc., thus making it synonymous with intertextuality too. More recently, lit-film scholars have suggested renaming their discipline "adaptation studies", and stepping beyond the lit-film paradigm to include all forms of cross-medial text processing, such as cinematization, novelization, gamification, musicalization, etc. (see, e.g., Leitch 2017, 13).

Following this, the meaning of "adaptation", like that of "translation", has become vacuous and its use tautological. The expression "film adaptation" or "film translation" now means "film(ing)". At best, both terms suggest an interest in past, present and future (i.e. to be expected) conditioners; and since all human activity is conditioned by past, present and future contexts, all artefacts (e.g. movies, screenplays) may be seen as translations or adaptations. Therefore, to teach screenwriting in terms of translation or adaptation means little more than to teach screenwriting.

What is one teaching?

To define adaptation or translation is one thing, to describe how people have interacted with these phenomena is yet another. Critics have already distinguished between different user-groups displaying different needs: for example, screenwriters, teachers and scholars (see, e.g., Batty 2016; Bailey 2019), but there are more categories to consider. If we represent screenwriting, translation, and/or adaptation as x, we may distinguish between practicing x (A), teaching x (B), and studying x (C). Since A, B and C also represent patterns of behaviour, one may in addition practice A/B/C, teach A/B/C and study A/B/C. Following this, one may reflect on some of the following statements:

- An excellent (screen)writer is not necessarily a good teacher or researcher.
- An excellent researcher is not necessarily a good teacher or writer.
- An excellent teacher is not necessarily a good writer or researcher.
- The best method to teach is not necessarily the best method to write or do research.
- The best method to study is not necessarily the best method to write or teach/learn.
- The best method to write is not necessarily the best method to study or teach/learn.
- My best teaching, learning, studying method is not necessarily your best method.
- ...

These statements suggest that even though performing a practice, and teaching/learning (T/L) and studying that practice represent closely interrelated practices, they require, at least in part, distinct sets of talents, knowledge, skills, training and experience. A native French speaker does not necessarily know how to teach someone French, nor does a successful (screen)writer *per se* know how to teach screenwriting. At best, the writer may show or explain "how s/he does it", and that may not be everyone's best way of learning.

So-called hybrid practitioners are people who put on multiple "hats" so to speak: writer-teachers, scholar-teachers, or scholar-writers. Innate talent is a limited resource, which like most things in life, is unequally distributed among humans. So are environmental studying, teaching and learning opportunities. Consequently, for most people, expertise in one area is more accessible than in two or more. Hence, the choice to "specialize", i.e. to focus study,

training and/or practice on one subject matter rather than on two or more. Does specialization offer the perfect solution? Not necessarily. But since the "perfect" solution, i.e. to know everything about everything, is beyond everyone's reach, one must do with second-best solutions. The jury is still out on the debate between generalists, so-called hyphenated experts, and degrees of specialization. However, pending their verdict, the aforesaid conceptual distinctions are useful if one is to even start such a debate.

In the meantime, the expression "teaching screenwriting, translation and/or adaptation" signifies many different things depending on the user-groups (e.g. writers, readers) that are involved.

Definitional proposals

Following Sherry's advice, this section repeats some definitional proposals that were made more recently in LFAS (see Cattryse 2018a; 2020). In a way, they suggest going back to basics, starting with two basic notions that help commence any making process: if ideas pop up in one's mind, wherever they came from, one can either drop or keep these ideas. With respect to the ideas one keeps, one may decide to either adopt or adapt them during their execution. Not surprisingly, the distinction between adopting and adapting mirrors the aforesaid common parlance distinction between translating and adapting. The postmodern reader who resents any distinction, and especially binary distinctions, may be ready to stop reading right now. That is why, before moving on, a few heuristic *a priori*'s require reiterating first. They should be common knowledge by now in LFAS, but they may still be less well-known in screenwriting studies. Once again, I can only briefly summarize what has already been explained repeatedly and more extensively (see, e.g., Cattryse 2014, 263ff.; 2018b; 2020):

a. Heuristic *a priori*'s

1. Comparative studies teach us that common parlance expressions such as A is "the same" as B or B is "different from" A are counterproductive when they essentialize perceived phenomena, i.e. when they present them as if from a perspective-less perspective. Since perception, knowledge and communication are always partial, perspectival and time-based, a more practical approach consists in discerning and describing (dis)similarity relations between two or more *comparanda* in terms of patterns or categories.
2. (Dis)similarity relations, like patterns or categories, emerge or disappear depending on multiple factors, including a subject's previous knowledge and experience, memory and memory retrieval, awareness, intention and focus or level of analytical detail ("zooming in" or "zooming out"), expectations conditioning future experiences, research tools (e.g. a telescope versus a microscope) and methods, etc. Consequently, two analysts can compare any two items along an unlimited number of dimensions and spot both similarity³ and dissimilarity relations.⁴ However, when adopting a critical realist point of view (see, e.g.,

³ See, e.g., the raven and the writing desk in *Alice in Wonderland*.

⁴ See, e.g. the Heraklitean view on the world as a continuous flux.

Blackburn 2006), this does not imply that “anything goes” (Cattrysse 2014, 56; 182). “Unlimited” does not mean “boundless”. The unlimited number of perspectives is still bounded by what exists in the world. Consequently, if two or more individuals may endlessly discuss about similarities and dissimilarities, it is also possible for them to agree on (dis)similarity relations between *comparanda*, based on sharing one or more of the above listed parameters. In that case, they can start comparing research results and build on each other's acquired knowledge. Given the fact that the number of “views” where no pattern appears infinitely outnumber the number of views which reveal the pattern, - that number may be reduced to zero or to one -, it is generally much easier to disconfirm (or miss) a pattern than to discover or (re)affirm it.

3. Patterns are conceived as probabilistic rather than Aristotelean “all-or-nothing” categories. They leave space for gradient category-membership (cf. Wittgenstein's notion of “family resemblance”). On this view, clear-cut binary conceptual distinctions facilitate the perception and description of intermediate “grey” zones. Moreover, empirical findings in cognitive psychology show that human interaction with the world improves when occurring at a “basic” level of mental representation, i.e. the level which, according to the beholder, maximizes within-category coherence or similarity and maximizes between-category dissimilarity (Minda 2015, 68–72). These findings suggest one should favour narrower categories over wider ones, since the former tend to display more homogeneous sets of category-members and sharper category boundaries, whereas wider categories tend to present more heterogeneous sets of category-members and fuzzier between-category boundaries. Finally, theories of categorization distinguish between the sharp/fuzzy and rigid/flexible divide: one may conceive of both sharp and fuzzy boundaries as static and dynamic entities. The distinction depends on a synchronic versus diachronic analytical point of view.

b. Translation, adaptation, working definitions

If one accepts these *a priori's*, it is possible to study translational and adaptational phenomena as two (relatively) distinct sets of phenomena. Following Cattrysse (2018a; 2020), one may describe “translation” and “adaptation” in intermedial and intertextual terms. In medial terms, both translation and adaptation represent medium-agnostic superordinate categories, which assemble numerous medially applied forms of translations and adaptations as subordinate family members. Since a screenplay typically prepares a film or TV production, it makes sense to focus on translational and adaptational phenomena as applied within the medium-specific contexts of literature and film or TV. However, since “new” media developed with the coming of the Internet and the World Wide Web, written preparations for “new” media productions have been needed as well. This has launched thinking about screenwriting for these “new” media. Since these “new” media, and the technologies that materialize them continue to evolve, discussions about compartmentalizations of these media and working definitions are ongoing. However, each time, a community of scholars can agree on a temporary conceptual and terminological snapshot of medial boundaries, they can start studying intra-, inter-, trans and cross-medial interactions and compare notes with each other.

In intertextual terms, translational phenomena hereafter point to invariance-orientedness with respect to the translated. Adaptational phenomena imply change with respect to the adapted, entailing "better fit" within the hosting context(s). Both variance and invariance are treated as patterns, which emerge or disappear depending on the aforesaid conditions. Suggestions regarding how to assess "better fit" have already been made (see, e.g., Cattrysse 2020, 31ff.), and require further debating. Sometimes the conditions are obvious, at other times they are not. This is typical of probabilistic categorizing. However, I cannot imagine that it would be impossible for two (or more) scholars to agree on a commonly shared working definition for that issue as well.

c. *Screenwriting as translation and adaptation*

Following this, "teaching screenwriting as translation and adaptation" means "teaching screenwriting with an eye on past, present and future conditioners". These conditioners operate as internal (e.g. ideas spontaneously popping up in one's mind) and external cues (e.g. a conversation with another person, a book one read, movie one saw, ...), triggering ideas, which, if they reach the level of consciousness, allow the (screen)writer to decide whether to drop or keep the idea, and if s/he decides to keep it, whether to adopt (or translate) or adapt (or change) the idea. The conceptual distinction between adopting and adapting concerns a what-question, and is considered to precede how, why, when and where-questions (see below).⁵ Indeed, both adopting (aka similarity relations) and adapting (aka dissimilarity relations) may play (dis)similar roles in a target context. For example, when the makers of *Satan Met a Lady* 1936 came across Dashiell Hammett's successful novel *The Maltese Falcon* (1930), they must have thought that the bleak and dark world represented in the novel did not suit their film audience. Perhaps, they thought common folks suffered already enough hardship in those days, they did not need paying to see more of that hardship on the screen? Hence the filmmakers turned Hammett's fictional world upside down, i.e. they "adapted" it to better fit and continue the then fashionable gentleman-screwball-detective movie. Conversely, when four years later, World War II broke out, different filmmakers found themselves in a different world making different plans. This time, they adopted (i.e. translated) rather than adapted the main features of Hammett's social world and thus innovated the detective film into what later would come to be known as *film noir*. In other words, whereas in the 1930s, adaptation served the continuation of a then successful film genre, in the early 1940s, translation served innovation of the contemporary film detective genre. Similarly, when Mankiewicz and his team accepted the assignment to make a movie based on Graham Greene's 1955 *The Quiet American*, they too turned Graham Greene's fictional world upside down, not so much to conserve or to innovate an existing film genre as to teach Greene and the likes of him a geo-political lesson. Graham Green's "good guy", the British journalist Fowler, became the bad guy in the 1958 film adaptation, and the novel's bad guy, the quiet American Pyle, became the movie's hero. What was read in the novel as criticism of contemporary US foreign policy was turned into anti-communist propaganda on the screen. When four decades later, different filmmakers made a different movie based on Greene's novel, they adopted (i.e. translated rather than changed or adapted) the novel's

⁵ The suggestion to structure research according to what, why, how, where and when-questions is not new in (film) adaptation studies. See, e.g., Cattrysse (1990; 1992).

visionary premonitions vis-à-vis the US imperialist plans in the East. Translation taught the audience a different geo-political lesson.

The purpose of these examples is not to reduce the position and function of a movie to three or four sentences, but to show how, once two or more practitioners, teachers or scholars agree on a working definition (e.g. the what-question about translation or adaptation), they may tackle why, how, where and when-questions. Moreover, once agreement is reached on a common meta-terminology, stakeholders may compare findings, verify or falsify hypotheses, and if that is the goal, notice if they are making progress or not.

II. ROMANTIC VIEW ON ART AND CULTURE

A second obstacle concerns the Romantic view⁶ on art and culture. This section discusses briefly some core features of the Romantic ideology, and how they make Romantics look down on screenwriting, adaptation and translation as inferior phenomena in general. It explains at once how in order to legitimate their work and themselves, stakeholders in these fields go out of their way to submit to the Romantic rule. Finally, suggestions follow on how re-opening the Romantic view to its wider pre-Romantic dimensions could allow for the definitional proposals to work, and enhance the practice, teaching and study of screenwriting (as) translation and adaptation more in general.

The Romantic bias: a recent Western invention

Art historians and sociologists agree that the Romantic view on art and culture is a recent Western invention that is barely two hundred years old (see, e.g., Shiner 2001, 3; 2017, 306).⁷ First traces appear in the late 1400s, when in Italy, some architects, painters and sculptors working for the rich and famous wanted more money⁸ and therefore argued they deserved a higher socio-cultural status than their fellow trade and craftsmen (Shiner 2001, 12). The Romantic value system establishes and peaks between 1800 and 1850 (see, e.g., van Gorp et al. 1991, 355). It then continues to evolve, trading traits with more recent fashions like postmodernism and neo-liberalism (see, e.g., Gielen and De Bruyne 2012). Today the evolved version of the Romantic bias, - which one could label as Romanticism 2.0 -, continues to propagate some of its original values, - sometimes even with greater fervour than two hundred years ago (see, e.g., McGann 1983, 91) -, while at once defending some newer ones

⁶ There are many definitions of "Romanticism", and multiple Romantic views on art and culture I cannot discuss in one essay (see, e.g., Lucas 1948; Larissy 1999, 1).

⁷ Previous scholars have used different names to denote more or less similar sets of values. See, e.g., Kristeller (1951), Shiner (2001), Mattick (2003), and Clowney (2008) who distinguish between a "modern" and a "pre-modern" system, Lotman (1977), who distinguishes between the old and the new as an aesthetics of identity and an aesthetics of opposition, Bourdieu (1998) who distinguishes between an aesthetics of continuity and an aesthetics of discontinuity, Abrams (1989, 140), who speaks of a disinterested "contemplation" model that replaced a purposeful "construction" model, and some creativity scholars who study similar judgmental patterns in terms of Rationalism and Romanticism (see, e.g., Sawyer 2006, 15ff.).

⁸ Weiner (2000, 63) quotes the German painter Albrecht Dürer, a contemporary of Leonardo da Vinci and Michelangelo when Dürer says: "a wonderful artist should charge highly for his art... no money is too much for it".

it acquired along the way. This may also explain some of its inherent contradictions (McGann 1983, 2).

The Romantic bias: core features

Art creation is about free, individual self-expression. The onus is on the individual rather than the collective, the self rather than the other. Freedom signifies my freedom before yours, ours before theirs. Interestingly, self-centredness may point to the author as well as to the audience. In the former case, the maker is glorified as a God-like Genius creating out of nothing, and oblivious of his (rather than her) audience, lest he be branded as commercial. In the latter case, the postmodern "death of the author" redirects its focus on the audience, who must be empowered to interpret artworks in their own way (see below). The Romantic view does not consider an in-between position where a sender and receiver communicate, i.e. share common-alities. Individual self-sufficiency and personal freedom also imply total independence. An artwork is self-sufficient and complete; its making process did not submit to outside influences or social obligations. Hence, the importance of related Romantic values such as originality and newness, unicity, difference, and change for the sake of change. The past is what one must discontinue. Life is one big zero-sum competition: "first is first, second is nobody".⁹

Following this, the development of the Romantic ideology has created a rift between art (now understood as "high art") and craft, promoting the former and demoting the latter. It has done so for example by devaluing common use and limiting the set of acceptable art utilities basically to aesthetic contemplation, collection, ostentatious display, and investment and pecuniary gain (see, e.g., Becker 2008, 278). Since artworks are not to be used as people have been accustomed to using them, a common Romantic tactic has consisted in "de-instrumentalizing" an artefact. To de-instrumentalize actually means to detract something from its common societal use in order to ascribe it an autonomous status and aesthetic value. In addition, Romanticism has demoted maker's skills. For example, Becker (2008, 279) points out that

What the older artist-craftsman has spent a lifetime learning to do is suddenly hardly worth doing. People are doing his work in the sloppiest possible way and being thought superior to him just because of it.

A commonly heard critical reaction from non-aficionados is: "My three years-old kid could have done this". At times, an artist's or critic's exegetic skills may take over, cover for the lack of making skills, and dazzle or shock some audiences;¹⁰ thus foreshadowing the classic divides between the idea and its execution, the mental and the physical, the academic and the vocational.

⁹ A quote from the gangster character Mr. Brown (Richard Conte) in *The Big Combo* (1955).

¹⁰ As I write these lines (Sept. 2021), the papers present a more recent illustration of this type of behaviour: a Danish artist called Jens Haaning took 72.000€ from a museum and sent two blank canvases with the title "Take the money and run".

Disparaging screenwriting, translation and adaptation

Resistance against these divides is as old Romanticism itself. However, experts agree that today, the Romantic ideology continues to prevail in Western art and culture.¹¹ If craft manages to pass as art, it does so more often by replicating rather than by resisting the Romantic rule (see, e.g., Weiner 2000, 113; Shiner 2001, 3; Mattick 2003, 1; Sawyer 2006, 11; Clowney 2008, np). When looking at screenwriting, translation and adaptation, this seems to be the case as well, and as indicated above, it hinders not only the aforesaid definitional proposals, but the practice, teaching/learning and study of screenwriting in terms of translation and adaptation in general. Here are some examples of how Romantics disparage screenwriting, translation, and adaptation, and force stakeholders to comply.

a. Romanticizing screenwriting

The Romantic bias appears when critics look down on screenwriting as a utilitarian practice, and when they treat the screenplay as an intermediary, i.e. dependent text, "a signpost rather than a destination" (Harper 2015, 111). It shows when it demotes skills and a well-made script, i.e. one that shows professional skills and efficiency (in its preparing the work for the production team), and trivializes it as a "mere blueprint" (see, e.g., Baker 2016, 71), a "prototype", "guideline" or "outline" for the production (Ksenofontova 2020, 2–3).

The Romantic bias emerges also when in order to promote the screenplay or themselves, directors, producers and writers compete for Auteur-ship, a battle between egos that started well before Astruc's (1948) "caméra-stylo" in the early 1900s (Dupont 1919, 7–14; Paech 1988, 33). It shows when stakeholders "de-instrumentalize" screenplays (e.g. the closet screenplay), and publish them as stand-alone works to be contemplated on their own (see, e.g., Baker 2016, 71; Ksenofontova 2020, 45ff.);¹² when critics borrow Romantic values from other, adjacent (e.g. literary) art forms to assess screenplays as "worthy" objects (see, e.g., Balázs 1939; Winston 1973; Corliss 1985; Koivumäki 2010; Geerts 2014; Ksenofontova 2020), and when writers (see, e.g., Derek Jarman) and like-minded critics deliberately write and discuss screenplays in terms of unique and poly-interpretable expressions in a hybrid or fluid, and therefore mystical and un-categorizable genre (see, e.g., Mota 2005; Geerts 2014). I refer for example to Alexandra Ksenofontova, who in her study of *The Modernist Screenplay*, distinguishes between a "literary" and a "functional" reading of a screenplay. A published screenplay is "worth of" (sic) a literary reading if "it demonstrates a pluralism, ambiguity, and complexity of possible meanings" (2020, 9), and "presumes the power of the reader to interpret the script in their own way" (2020, 5). A functional reading applies when "the screenplay is univocal and cannot be misread" (ibid.).

¹¹ Once again, limited space prevents me from developing more in detail how growing tensions between the two value systems have entangled their division in terms of assimilation and resistance processes (see, e.g., Shiner 2001, 269ff.), and how attempts have been made to reconcile both value systems (see, e.g., Kristeller 1951; Shiner 2001; Clowney 2008; Catrysse 2021).

¹² The issue rekindles the literary legitimization process of theatre (see, e.g., Jahn 2001).

b. Romanticizing (lit-film) adaptation and translation

Romantics look down on literary screen adaptation for the same and additional reasons. They do so when screen adaptations are seen as dependent on the literary values they represent on the screen, and demoted as utility tools when they serve to teach or propagate literary values (see, e.g., Cutchins 2010; Gould 2017). Romanticism emerges also when artistic creation is reduced to self-expression and critics search for individual "auteurs" in (film) adaptation (see, e.g., Boozer 2008), or when adaptation is conceived as a derivative, i.e. unoriginal and therefore inferior phenomenon. Interestingly, the Originality rule allows Romantics to criticize adapters for both being faithful and unfaithful to the text they adapt, in spite of claims about artistic freedom. The correlated debate pro or contra the compare/contrast approach (see, e.g., Hudelet 2015) depends on the same Romantic reflex, which consists in attributing primacy to the pre-text. In order to solve (or dissolve?) this problem, some Romantics propose to de-hierarchize pre-text/post-text relations. As discussed above, one strategy applied to achieve that goal consists in inflating the term "adaptational" to make it synonymous with "intertextual".¹³ Another consists in "dialogizing" the concept of adaptation (see, e.g., Bruhn 2013). Both practices generally entail redirecting the focus from "adaptation" understood as a one-directional and irreversible time-based process to "adaptation" conceived as a dynamic, networked, i.e. poly-centric and multi-directional end-product, functioning in its *ad hoc* time-space context(s).¹⁴ A third Romantic strategy, used for example in intermediality and inter-art studies, de-hierarchizes, or rather discards pre-text/post-text relations by avoiding or rejecting the derivative term "adaptation", and by focusing only or mostly on simultaneous co-creation (see, e.g., Edgerton 1988; Jenkins 2003, np; 2008).

When looking at the world through a Romantic lens, translation finds itself in an even worse place. Imagine a Romantic confronted with a phenomenon that is meant to accurately reproduce heterogenic discourse: no self-expressive author, *re*-production signifying the opposite of originality, with the additional prescriptive rule of accuracy to top it all. It should therefore not surprise that already in the 1970s, translation scholars fought to break free from this "slavish" notion of translation, and urged their peers to re-think the concept as a productive, authorial act of interpretation creating something new.

c. Romanticizing teaching/learning

The Romantic value system does not stop at instructing practitioners on which practices are valuable, and which are not; it rules and stratifies the whole of society, and therefore includes knowledge production (e.g. research) as well as knowledge distribution and consumption (e.g. education). This is where Romanticism understood as a set of cultural values, becomes an ideology that is used to legitimize socio-cultural, political and economic power (see, e.g., Eagleton 2005, 36). As such, scholars have denounced it as segregating and elitist (see, e.g., Shiner 2001, 75–77; Mattick 2003, 2; Hyland 2017, 305–6; Kiriya, Kompatsiaris, and Mylonas

¹³ Intertextuality studies owes its very name to Romanticism, which in the 1960s was determined to eradicate any hint to influence studies and "source hunting" (see, e.g., Orr 2008, 15–16; Juvan 2008, 54ff.; Cattrysse 2020, 42).

¹⁴ Anglophone lit-film studies often conceive "intertextuality" as a state of being, not a process of becoming (see, e.g., Cardwell 2018, 8ff.). A diachronic view may apply to existents as well as to events.

2020, 2). For example, the Romantic bias conditions meta-didactic reflection when deifying a maker implies mystifying the making process, and thus its T/L processes. The Romantic bias also underlies the rift between academic and vocational training, which runs parallel to the divide between art and craft.

TEACHING/LEARNING AS AN INTUITIVE OR IMPOSSIBLE PROCESS

The Romantic view on T/L rejects any notion of schooling in input-output terms, targeting measurable results to be obtained within a pre-determined lapse of time (see, e.g., Hall 2010, 105). "Teachers are born, not made", and one "cannot train or develop teachers" (see, e.g., Kristeller 1951; Knights 2014, vii–viii). At best, teaching art becomes an art in itself, i.e. a practice that remains as mysterious as the one it teaches. As an example, I already referred to Cutchins et al. (2010, xiv). In support to their claim, the editors quote painters like Edward Betts who states that "painting (...) cannot be taught in a "canned" fashion" (quoted in Cutchins, Raw, and Welsh 2010, xiv), or Auguste Renoir claiming that "if [one] could explain a picture, it wouldn't be art" (ibid.).

VOCATIONAL VERSUS ACADEMIC TRAINING

Both Romantically biased stakeholders in the art worlds and academics in the Humanities disparage craft and applied knowledge respectively in terms of use, and they respectively promote Gautier's notion of art for art's sake and the Platonic notion of "disinterested" knowledge as superior. "Disinterested" knowledge refers to ideational knowledge, i.e. knowledge which ignores material constraints. This notion prepares the grounds for a campaign against medium specificity, a topic that fuels controversy especially in lit-film and transmedia studies (see below).

Even though only the screenwriter and the translator exist as institutionalized professions, and not the adapter, the tensions between vocational and academic training are significant in all three fields. Tensions increase when the analytical focus includes the art worlds and decrease when they do not.¹⁵ Some critics express their disapproval of a vocational approach quite openly. I refer for example to Price (2010, 27) who regrets it when screenwriting teaching is skewed towards a vocational rather than a scholarly or historical approach,¹⁶ or Van Doorslaer (2020, 1), who expresses similar regrets with respect to translation.¹⁷ Even though adaptation does not exist as a proper profession, tensions between vocational and academic training appear also here. For example, literary scholar Kamilla Elliott (2014, 78ff.) prides her students for "translating" bits and pieces of literary texts into various media, other than film. One student baked a three-tier cake adapting three chapters of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. Another student made a full-sized door into an art object called "The entrance to Wonderland". Yet another student wrote a musical score "adapting" Mikhail Bakhtin's theory of the carnivalesque, etc. Not a word is said about how one even begins to bake a cake, make a door, or write a piece of music. Only the idea matters; its material realization is ignored or taken for granted. A similar attitude is found in filmmaking when crew members are segregated in terms of "above" and "below the line". It concurs with the

¹⁵ Creativity scholars also have to adapt their concepts and methods depending on whether their focus includes the arts or not (see, e.g., Weiner 2000; Boden 2004; Sawyer 2006).

¹⁶ The impact of the Romantic bias in screenwriting manuals is undeniable and deserves a proper study. In *The Art of Adaptation: Turning Fact and Fiction into Film*, high profile screenwriting teacher Linda Seger (1992, 70) does not require systematic, corpus-based research to claim that according to her, the "best" remakes are "those where the writer was not afraid to change the original".

¹⁷ See also the discussion triggered by practitioner-scholar Brian Mossop's vocational reflections (Mossop 2017a; Katan 2017; Pym 2017; Scarpa 2017; Mossop 2017b).

Romantics mentioned above calling a well-made screenplay "a mere blueprint". Ignoring the makers' skills, training and experience helps to belittle them.

d. Romanticizing Research

Finally, Romanticism invades the Humanities when contrary to the sciences, critics favour values such as aesthetics, ethics, politics, the emotional over the values of reality, rationality and truth (Klein and Frodeman 2017, 145). I refer for example to the aforementioned Romantic treatment of pre-text/post-text relations among academics. Following this, research is repurposed and the truth becomes a commodity that is used to propagate Romantic values. It is adopted when it is convenient, and adapted, ignored or replaced with "alternative facts" when it is not. Romanticism shows again when academic culture prizes individualism over teamwork (cf. the individual genius-scientist Albert Einstein who invents out of nothing) (see, e.g., Crow and Dabars 2017, 475), and reduces the history of science to great-man accounts; or when critics prefer idiographic knowledge (the understanding of one case) over nomothetic knowledge (producing more general knowledge), thus mirroring the Romantic's preference for the unique over the common (see the aforesaid case-based studies in LFAS). The endless accumulation of unique and disparate individual experiences fits Romanticism's individualism, but prevents scholars from discerning more general patterns, and may deceptively suggest they do not exist. It makes it also impossible for researchers to compare research results or to establish if the discipline is making progress or not (see, e.g., Cattrysse 2014, 15; Semenza and Hasenfratz 2015, 9). Romanticism shows when theories are invented for the sake of newness rather than as problem-solving tools that serve an investigatory purpose.¹⁸ It emerges when one values academic research aimed at "disinterested" knowledge over vocational research, targeting instrumentalized knowledge (see above); a divide that mirrors the Romantic condescension for the utilitarian in craftwork, and builds on the notion that the mental is superior to the physical, and therefore the idea to its execution.

Restoring the pre-Romantic view

The above shows how stakeholders go out of their way to legitimize screenwriting, translation and adaptation by submitting to the Romantic rule. What if efforts went in the opposite direction? What if one tried to nudge the Romantic perspective back to its less exclusive, pre-Romantic dimensions, allowing stakeholders to appreciate both (high) art and craft-based values on an equal basis again? These proposals are not new (Kristeller 1951; Shiner 2001; Mattick 2003; Clowney 2008; Cattrysse 2021). Hence, what if, following these scholars, one revalued use and skills on a par with grace as positive elements of "aesthetic" value? Needless to say, this would involve recalibrating the weight of and the interdependencies between the traditional Romantic values. A full analysis of this reorganization deserves a separate study. I hereafter focus on some shifts and how writing, teaching and studying screenwriting in terms of maintenance (aka translation) and change (aka adaptation) could benefit from them.

¹⁸ One adaptation scholar compares theories with candy to be chosen from a candy store (see, e.g., Westbrook 2010, 43).

a. Revaluing uses

To revalue use invites one to distinguish between what things are (said to be)¹⁹ and what they are for to whom. It involves considering different user-groups interacting with things in terms of different means and ends (see above). One artefact may serve multiple purposes; it may be made for one purpose, yet be used for another, and one user's end may be another user's means. Consequently, all artefacts may be seen as instrumental (means) or as autonomous (end-goals), contingent on their use and users. This observation does not answer the question why so-called "autonomous" artefacts would be superior to instrumental ones, but it does challenge the Romantic rule that disparages screenplays, translations or adaptations as intermediate or instrumental texts. On this view, a screenplay²⁰ is neither more nor less instrumental or autonomous than the production it prepares; its use is only different. One may assume that the screenplay represents the complete and finished end-goal to the screenwriter, irrespective of the fact that subsequently, different users may use it for different purposes subsequently. If the screenwriter is lucky, a production team may use the script to make a movie or TV program, and an audience may then use the latter to experience a media event, and yet other interested parties may use media experiences as a means to achieve their goals. The aforementioned examples from the 1930s and 1940s illustrate how the same logic applies to translations and adaptations.

While what things are and what they are for to whom vary across time and space, it is also true that certain usages are more common in certain communities than others. A tennis racket is typically made to play tennis, in spite of the fact that in the movie *The Apartment* (1959), C.C. Baxter (Jack Lemmon) uses it to dry his spaghettis; and at times, community members even professionalize certain uses (e.g. screenwriting, translating, but not adapting) as if to socially officialize their end-goal status. Hence, within a Romantic context, to *de-instrumentalize*, which *in se* is impossible, actually means to *re-instrumentalize*, i.e. to detract an artefact from its common usage. That is why Sklovsky's "to defamiliarize" or Brecht's "to alienate" are more accurate terms. As such, the strategy consists in reducing legitimate use to a limited set of acceptable art utilities (see Becker above). Hence, what if one extended the Romantic view on use, and assessed artefacts also on the basis of virtuoso skills and competence?

Once it is understood that the autonomous-instrumental distinction is context and user-dependent, there are no *a priori* grounds to uphold the traditional dualisms and to favour the academic over the vocational, the mental over the physical, and the intellectual over the practical. In that case, practice-based research is neither more nor less instrumental than so-called fundamental or "disinterested" research, and one type of knowledge cannot be said to be superior or inferior to another without accounting for their use and users. To do so is like asking which of the two is the better tool: the microscope or the telescope, without considering who shall be using them and for what purpose (e.g. study subatomic particles,

¹⁹ The fact that we cannot describe things objectively, i.e. in a perspective-less way, does not mean that we cannot describe them at all. If the latter were the case, our interaction with the world would have been totally inadequate, and as a species we would have been extinct millions of years ago. This is yet another illustration of probabilistic category thinking, as opposed to Aristotelean "all-or-nothing" category-thinking (see above).

²⁰ Certain writers make a living writing and selling story ideas or treatments. To them, they constitute complete and finished end-products (see, e.g., Atchity and Wong 1997).

study galaxies, hit someone over the head with it, ...). Similarly, on this view, theories are not considered as interchangeable candy but as tools that serve an investigatory purpose. In the meantime, user-groups still can and do instrumentalize these judgmental distinctions in terms of cultural, socio-political and economical capital to identify their in-group as distinct from and superior to other out-groups.

b. Revaluing skills

Once an individual or a community has selected a legitimate goal, the next step consists in judiciously selecting tools and adequately applying them (see Cattrysse 2021, 12ff.). Both selecting and applying tools require specific skills and competence, which are unequally distributed among humans. Some (e.g. writing or reading) practices are therefore more or less difficult to perform than others. The distinction between "more-or-less-difficult-to-do" suggests opportunities with respect to didactic planning. For example, when designing step-wise T/L paths, it makes sense to start with the less difficult, and then to move on to the more difficult. While this is probably the most obvious statement one can make in any field of human behaviour (including art forms like music or painting), it is not in storytelling. Moreover, as indicated above, when discussing teaching and learning, one should specify first which practice one is considering. For example, regarding the aforementioned distinction between univocal and ambiguous writing, it should be clear that the latter may be challenging a reader's interpretive skills, but it is the former that defies writerly skills. Any beginning writer knows how to write ambiguously; few know how to write univocally. This example illustrates at once how a pre-Romantic approach reverses the interdependency between freedom and skills. Whereas on the Romantic view, makers' skills and competence are taken for granted or belittled, and the main concern is creative freedom, on this (pre-Romantic) view, freedom is understood as dependent on competence: the more competence, the more options available, the more creative freedom, for both the writer and the reader.

c. Recalibrating Romantic values

To revalue use in terms of skills and grace renders some compulsory Romantic values optional. I refer for example to self-centred individualism and mandatory newness. Once again, these values limit rather than broaden options in screenwriting (as) translation and adaptation.

INDIVIDUAL SELF-EXPRESSION

What if makers and users involved in the practice, teaching, learning, and study of screenwriting as translation and adaptation were not only interested in the individual and the self? What if art(isan) behaviour included also collective expression (see, e.g., Becker 2008, 1)? What if one saw individuals as group members and assessed artefacts as co-authored works, resulting from individual and group-level cooperation and competition. This would not detract from the fact that some individuals have been luckier than others in terms of being born more talented and stumbling into more fortunate circumstances. Hence, what if other-orientedness, aka considering the audience, were not automatically discarded as commercialism, but complemented self-

centredness, and accurately repeating valuable heterogenic discourse at the right time and in the right place (e.g. translating) could be valuable as well? What if an interest in the uniqueness of an experience (aka idiographic knowledge) were complemented with an interest in more general patterns (aka nomothetic knowledge), and the preference for one or the other were contingent, once again, on use (e.g. next year's ceramics exposition; national statistics)? What if, following more recent findings in neuro-science, one relativized the anthropocentric views on authorial intention, free-will, and desert, and thus created space to appraise (e.g. machine-made) artefacts from different points of view? To claim that the Romantic view prevails does not imply that non-Romantic approaches do not exist (see, e.g., Brian Boyd 2009; Bryan Boyd, Carroll, and Gottschall 2010; McStay 2018; du Sautoy 2019, and many more). To extend the set of Romantic art utilities entails however that they deserve more appreciation.

NEWNESS

Firstly, one might point out that the concepts "new" and "original" represent problematic terms. What appears as new or original to one person may not do so to another. Like magic, originality relies heavily on masquerade and ignorance. Secondly, what if newness and originality represented tools rather than ends, and an assessment of the former depended on how well they allowed users to achieve the latter? Difference and change (e.g. adaptation) would not longer be intrinsically superior (e.g. more free) to sameness and maintenance (e.g. translation);²¹ fidelity and infidelity with respect to the processed could both represent legitimate options depending on their use; people who love to relive a past experience (see, e.g., the success of reruns) would not *per se* be inferior to people constantly needing something new; "repeating", or "re-making", or "restoring", or "repairing" could be valued on a par with making something "new". Following this, one would not be forced to fix what is not broken, and the past would not longer be reduced to what one must discontinue.

Within the Romantic frame, newness often serves surprise. Even though there a good surprises and bad surprises, some creativity studies take surprise as a condition to qualify behaviour as creative as well (see, e.g., Boden 2009; du Sautoy 2019, 3). However, when materializing use in an efficient way, virtuoso skills and competence may surprise as well. Consequently, on this view, one may appraise a screenplay, translation and/or adaptation because they are well-made rather than because they are new. Newness does not exclude craftsmanship, and craftsmanship involves more than newness.

To make newness or originality an option (rather than an unconditional obligation) contingent on use relativizes at once the "first is first, second is nobody"-mantra. Sometimes it may be relevant to be first; at other times, it may not be so.²² This change of attitude could help dehierarchize pre-text/post-text relations without ignoring them, or judging them unconditionally in terms of superior/inferior. Adaptation and translation studies could be seen as part of intertextuality studies again, the word "influence" would not longer be taboo, and its workings could be assessed in terms of "well done". Needless to say, this would impact the teaching of screenwriting in significant ways.

To remove cut-throat competition at an individual level, and to displace it at wider societal levels (see, e.g., Singer 1981) might also restore trust between individuals, help them understand that human interaction also involves helping and sharing. This might counter-balance the unconditional

²¹ On Romantics bashing sameness, see, e.g., Cattrysse (2014, 149ff.).

²² For an illustration of the kind of anti-social behaviour this leads to, see, e.g., <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T4rWVQeEI7Y>; Donald Trump shoving the PM of Montenegro at a NATO summit in Brussels; visited on 08-06-2021.

bashing of lecture-based training, accompanied with the blind faith in individual learning-by-doing that are advocated these days in Western settings. Societies invest billions of euros to train talented people to become experts, and when their expertise is needed, it is discarded as authoritarian on the basis of ignorance and distrust. As I write these lines during the covid-19 pandemic, people in the streets and in the media publicly demean virologists as authoritarian for reporting scientifically on viruses not behaving democratically. The reoccurring logic is: When the truth is inconvenient, pretend it does not exist, except as a misguided social construct, and/or attack its messenger. The same logic applies in the pre-text/post-text debates and the medium-specificity controversy.

III. CONCLUSIONS

If one accepts the aforesaid definitions of translation and adaptation and the proposals regarding an extension of the Romantic view on art and culture, one can look at some old (film) adaptation studies offering research suggestions that could also help setup teaching screenwriting as translation and adaptation. These proposals were developed in the late 1980s, and published in the early 1990s (Cattrysse 1990; 1992; 2014). For practical reasons, the focus is restricted here to that of the maker (aka the screenwriter). A first set of questions could refer to a selection policy: What items to select and why? Unlike the traditional lit-film approach, writers select items (or not) from any medium for whatever reason they see fit. Answering the why-question prepares the next set of questions dealing with the actual translation and adaptation process. The above suggested already some possible answers: to innovate a dying genre or style, or to continue a successful one, to convey a different political message or to reaffirm a previous one, etc. Classical research tools mentioned in these studies (e.g. the "*tertium comparationis*", the accuracy and fidelity issues) may be useful as well: Do I select (elements of) a novel, painting, game, ... to adopt or to adapt actions, characters, settings, themes, aesthetic styles, or other? And why? To trigger an equivalent experience in the screenplay? To obtain a different experience? Something in between? What, how and why more exactly? Time and again, choices depend on competence first, and on freedom second. Hence, the first question is not: "Am I allowed to be faithful or not?" but "Am I capable of materializing that choice?" Then come the why and how-questions. Since no screenwriter works in a void, freedom restrictions remain relevant. There are the obvious copyright issues, but also the various individual and collective stakeholders' tastes and conventions (e.g. whether more popular, industry-based, or more elitist, art-oriented, or somewhere in-between), which will condition creative choices. I refer for example to the practice of "cultural orthodoxy" (see, e.g., Cardwell 2002, 18; Cattrysse 2014, 121ff.).

To revalue use and skills entails revaluing medium-specificity (see above). As more new media develop and evolve at an ever-faster rate, medium-specificity becomes more, not less relevant. It is no coincidence that disciplinarization aligns with medial boundaries (see, e.g., Evans 2020, 21). To acknowledge the relevance of medial borders is not to disregard transmedial features, i.e. features that transcend those medial boundaries. Transcendancy (whatever its definition) cannot exist without something to transcend. Hence, a training program for screenwriting as translation and adaptation cannot overestimate the challenges raised by the media one is going to work in. Some of them are obvious, at least to practice-oriented minds: learning how to write a novel is very different from learning how to write and produce a movie. Other medial boundaries may be as challenging but remain hidden. One particularly difficult obstacle I have seen many beginning writers struggle with concerns the

old saying: "show me, don't tell me". It involves the *drama*-tization of verbal concepts, i.e. the translation of verbalized concepts such as "He is poor", "She is forgiving", "They became best friends" into dramatic action: someone (character) doing something (action) somewhere (setting), and where denotational accuracy is the challenge, not writing something everyone can interpret in their own way. Following this, one may reconceive of screenwriting as medium-specific dramatization, irrespective of whether it was based on a novel, a game, a painting, real life or imaginary experiences.²³ To be more precise: if screenwriting concerns the written preparation of an audiovisual production, verbalized ideas, wherever they came from, need dramatizing in the screenwriter's mind, i.e. translating and/or adapting into actions, then verbalizing those mentally dramatized actions onto the page, by way of preparing their reenactment on the screen.

Needless to say, there are many more problems to tackle before starting a serious discussion on how to teach screenwriting and/as translation and adaptation. Studies in science as a social practice (see, e.g., Frodeman 2017, 3) reveal evolutionary behavioral patterns, which dampen the optimism about the foregoing proposals; especially those regarding the extension of the Romantic views, which need accepting before the definitional proposals can become operational. Romanticism 2.0 aligns in many respects with (post)-Darwinian evolutionary urges, and since human nature changes only over longer stretches of time, - it took Romanticism 2.0 half a millennium to install -, it is not likely to go away overnight. One may therefore assume that, since *H. Sapiens* represents a social species consisting of unequally talented, self-serving members, power-related tensions and hierarchies between individuals and groups shall be around for many centuries to come. In the meantime, Romanticism may continue to change its colours (aka its identifying and segregating values), but it is unlikely to change its nature (aka social purpose) anytime soon. Nevertheless, to reveal some of the less sympathetic features of the Romantic ideology may stir more awareness. Optimists claim that the first domino stones have already started to topple. Who knows if and when others follow?

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²³ The fact that this has not always been the case in the past, and that it may change in the future does not detract from the fact that it is a practical stance today.

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