



SYMPOSIUM

THE AFTERLIVES OF LITERARY CLASSICS

AUDIOVISUAL, MATERIAL
AND CULTURAL
RE-INTERPRETATIONS
AND RE-IMAGININGS



SAIT
SOCIÉTÉ ANGLICISTE
ARTS, IMAGES, TEXTES



27TH MARCH 2026
SALLE G04 - CAMPUS LETTRES ET
SCIENCES HUMAINES | NANCY

THE AFTERLIVES OF LITERARY CLASSICS

Salle G04
Campus Lettres et Sciences Humaines
Nancy - Université de Lorraine

PROGRAMME

8:30

Welcome & Coffee

9:00

Introduction

Nathalie Collé (IDEA) & Pauline Schwaller (IDEA)

SESSION 1 | LITERARY CLASSICS ON STAGE

(Chair: John S. Bak)

9:15

“Reworking Great Classics of English and American Literature through Performative Reading and Rewriting: A Dramatic, Didactic and Linguistic-Semiotic Perspective”

Jean-Rémi Lapaire (Université Bordeaux Montaigne)

The symbolic and enactive properties of posture and gesture (Jousse 2005; McNeill 2005; Streeck 2019) may be used in combination with the mechanisms of “intersemiotic translation” (Jakobson 1959) and “performative reflexivity” (Turner 1987) to develop *physical models of literary interpretation*. In the “performative reading” scenario, *reader-performers* are invited to rework great literary classics by Virginia Woolf, Henry James and Oscar Wilde, using simple but extremely powerful linguistic tools, such as syntactic compression, poetic essentialization and resemiotisation. A short playscript is designed that incorporates a tragic chorus and combines various delivery modes: recitation, pantomime, *tableau vivant*, dialogue, and choreographic interludes. The reworking process begins on campus, during multimodal seminars and workshop sessions, and continues abroad as the recreated pieces are performed by groups of volunteer students from the master’s programs in English Studies

and Performance Studies at Université Bordeaux Montaigne. Proper stage productions are designed for the annual *Teatro in Lingua, Lingua in Teatro* (TILLiT) festival, which is hosted by Università del Piemonte Orientale in Vercelli. The strongly “pictorial” performances must hold within the strict 25-minute time-frame imposed by the festival organizers. This requires further “essentialization” of the script while remaining faithful to the themes, style and literary aesthetics of the source text.

Performative reading and rewriting create a multisensory reading experience, rooted in perception, kinetic imagery and vocal activity. It is a different way of constructing knowledge and encouraging literary appreciation among language and literature students. The resemiotisation process forces participants to handle textual meanings differently and use their “interpretive potential” (Lapaire 2019) more fully, with unpredictable epiphanies and moving insights occurring along the way, like the Second Coming of Daisy in “The Courage to Be Herself : Daisy Miller unbowed” (2023); the transubstantiation of party wine into sacrificial blood in “Performing Mrs Dalloway” (2018); Jacob’s incessant journeys and brutal disintegration in “Moving through Jacob’s Room” (2021); the adoration of Percival in “Breaking Virginia’s Waves” (2019) and the idolatrous cult of Dorian in “Dorian Gray Goes Wilde” (2024). I will offer a linguistic-semiotic deconstruct the transformative process involved and share a small sample of anonymous testimonies taken from the notes and diaries kept by the students.

Jean-Rémi Lapaire is Professor Emeritus at Bordeaux Montaigne University. Until 2024, he worked as a full-time professor of cognitive linguistics, discourse pragmatics, gesture semiotics and language education. He was active in various departments: English studies, French as a foreign language, dance and theatre. In collaboration with professional stage artists, he has developed experiential seminars and workshops where abstract thought, sensory stimulation and movement are completely integrated. His current research interests include the “learning body”, “learning injuries” and phenomenological approaches to language learning. He regularly gives talks and master classes in France and Ireland on the connection between embodiment, sensation, gesture and oracy.

9:35

“Absalom, Absalom on the contemporary stage: William Faulkner and Edouard Glissant in conversation”

Sophie Maruéjols-Koch (Université Toulouse Jean Jaurès)

Faulkner’s novel *Absalom, Absalom*, first published in 1936, is a tale of epic dimensions that spans a period of almost a century, from 1807 to 1909. Set in the deep American South, the story it tells has to be reconstructed out of a cacophony of narrative voices that lead the reader into an inextricable plot in which History with a capital

H disintegrates into a multitude of subjective accounts. This disintegration is also that of a family, the Sutpens, whose mansion was raised from the Mississippi ground by the sweat of black people's brows only to be burnt down to ashes 300 pages later, the last remains of a home left in the trail of devastation caused by the American civil war.

Faulkner's unique style of writing makes reading an experience – not to say an ordeal – that could be compared to the adaptation process. For, it is up to the reader to reconstruct a story out of the splinters of time, space and reported facts that not only fragment the linearity of narration but also challenge the reader into constantly modifying and rearranging events told by so many embedded voices, filtered by so many characters, that it becomes impossible to find a way out of the contradictions, lack of knowledge or lies that fill the pages of the book. In a 1956 interview, Faulkner famously advised the readers who had difficulties understanding his work after two or three readings to “read it four times.” Beyond the joke, there is something about this reply that could shed light on the notion of “afterlife” as the survival of a work through a quality of opacity that demands the contribution of others. Such opacity is that of the trace as the always incomplete, unreliable, partial thing that remains: the only inheritance possible.

Severine Chavier took up Faulkner's challenge not only by reading the novel probably a lot more than four times, but also by dramatizing it for the stage at the Avignon festival in July 2024. The representation then travelled to the Théâtre de l'Odéon in Paris, where I saw it in March 2025. What is interesting about her adaptation is the way it both breaks away from Faulkner's legacy while breathing new life into the work of a writer sometimes deemed controversial and somewhat dated, yet one who is still celebrated as one of the greatest American authors of the twentieth century. More interesting still is that Chavier achieves this through yet another reading of Faulkner's novel, that of the French Caribbean poet and thinker Edouard Glissant, which adds another layer of meaning to the notion of “afterlife” as a capacity for survival that relies on the voices of others, as a form of transmission that has nothing to do with genealogical filiation or linear narration and everything to do with a rhizomatic dispersion of voices and temporalities, a proliferation of traces that alone can tie humanity together and make Faulkner's voice heard again in the world of today:

“Imagining and recreating from traces or recall removes a person far away from systems, far away not only from ideological thinking but even more from the thought of any imperative system. I insist upon this: imagining from and by traces is more fragile but more fruitful than thinking by systems.” (Edouard Glissant, “Creolisation and the Americas”).

Sophie Maruéjols-Koch (MCF, Université Toulouse-Jean Jaurès). Domaine de recherche : théâtre, cinéma, peinture, Etats-Unis 20e et 21e siècles. Publications dans des revues académiques dont *Transatlantica*, *E-Rea*, *Modern Drama*, *The Tennessee Williams Annual Review*, *Polysèmes*. Co-éditrice du dossier thématique sur les nouveaux enjeux du rire dans le théâtre anglophone contemporain, paru dans la revue *Miranda* en 2019. Ses recherches récentes s'intéressent au théâtre de Naomi Wallace. Plusieurs projets d'édition sont en cours dont une publication collective sur les nouvelles de Tennessee Williams dans *Les Cahiers de la nouvelle* et une monographie sur son œuvre peinte.



9:55

Discussion

SESSION 2 | (RE)STAGING SHAKESPEARE

(Chair: Barbara Muller)



“Vers le spectre: On *Hamlet* and the Afterlife, On *Hamlet's* Afterlife and Autism”

William McKenzie (Université Catholique de l'Ouest)

With its talk of undiscovered countries from whose bourn no traveller returns, or of purgatorial prison-houses, there are few literary classics that deal so expressly with the afterlife as Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. Jacques Derrida gave the critical history of this theme of the play something like a CPR jolt when, in 1993, he discussed Old Hamlet's Ghost in the first chapter of his *Spectres de Marx*. Therein, Derrida talks of the strange reluctance of the dead to die fully and permanently, whether the dead be the Ghost of Hamlet's father, or the dream of a socialist utopia in what was, as the time of writing, lost to the Fukuyaman post-Cold-War “end of history”.

After the American-English translation of Derrida's text, *Specters of Marx*, first appeared in 1994, its influence stretched into anglophone spiritual-presentist readings of *Hamlet* (see for example (ed.) Fernie 2002). But a later critical and theatrical afterlife, focused on Shakespeare and neurodiversity (see Seymour 2025), elicits a productive nuance of the French word spectre: not just the ghostly “spectre” in UK English (“specter” in US English), but also “spectrum”. A play dealing with the autistic spectrum, first staged in 2021 by Maurin Ollès and his collaborators – [Vers le spectre](#) – engages with the stakes of this very pun.

As part of an ANR JCJC-funded research project (“[AuFic](#)”), this paper proposes to travel vers le spectre in *Hamlet*, to examine its thematic and neurodivergent afterlives. By way of a case study, it analyses a [production of the play](#), rewritten and performed by a group of differently-abled actors and directed by Chela de Ferrari: a production which scrutinises the more conservative aspects of *Hamlet's* historically-accumulated cultural power, but which admires its treatment of defiant solipsism, as it recounts the prejudice and isolation that its fourth-wall-breaking protagonists have personally experienced. The paper then explores possible relationships between this spectral neurodiverse spectrum and an openness to utopian futurity and to the Other in whose name, over thirty years before, the Derridean-Shakespearean spectre was first invoked.

William McKenzie is MCF in Comparative Literature at the Université Catholique de l'Ouest (“UCO”), Angers campus. He is the author of *The Student's Guide to Shakespeare* (Edinburgh University Press 2017) and co-editor of *Shakespeare and I* (Continuum/Bloomsbury 2012). He has published articles or book chapters on Shakespeare's poetry, Renaissance obscenity, Ronsard's Petrarchism, theories of narcissism, Montaigne, the “Two Cultures” debate in the Humanities, and self-love and modernity, and has given conference talks on the theme of narcissism on critical theory, links between narcissistic personality disorder and online harassment, and the afterlives of *Shakespeare's Sonnets*. He was member of the research group MOBIL (“Migrations, Mobilités, Mobilisations”) at the UCO, during which he gave talks on a production of *Hamlet* in the so-called Calais “jungle”, on “Shakespeare's Outsiders”, and on “The Stranger's Case” speech from *Sir Thomas More*. Brother and nephew to people with autism, William is currently a member of the ANR-funded research group AuFic (“Les représentations générées de l'autisme en fiction”), and a book-chapter co-written with Mélanie Lallet on personal experiences of autism is in preparation for publication. His work on autism shares with his work on narcissism in interest in the politics of diagnosis and pathologisation.

10:35

“O horror, horror, horror!” (*Macbeth* 2.3.68): Screening the supernatural in Theatre Broadcasts of Shakespeare’s Plays”

Fabrice Schultz (Université de Haute Alsace)

Having discovered Duncan’s murdered body lying offstage, Macduff enters exclaiming “O horror, horror, horror! Tongue nor heart / Cannot conceive nor name thee” (*Macbeth*, 2.3.68-69). An emphatic epizeuxis followed by a hyperbole yoking together the unnatural and the unspeakable amplify the gruesomeness of a scene which spectators have to picture in their mind’s eye. Shakespeare’s plays are filled with instances of horrid apparitions, mutilations and brutal murders which may be performed on stage or vividly described by direct witnesses. The representation of these scenes thus tests one of the founding aesthetic principles of Shakespeare’s plays, namely the prevalence of the “imaginary force” of the spectators, upon which the actors need to “work” (*Henry V*, Prologue).

The ever-increasing number of new productions and digitised performances of Shakespeare’s plays has been identified as one of the key elements of a cultural phenomenon described by Pidduck as “Shakespeare and Elizabethan heritage industry” (130). Indeed, the rise of “global Shakespeare” is “inseparable from the prevalence of digital video on commercial and open-access platforms” (Joubin, 141). As such, these hybrid works ensure the continuous and global presence of Shakespeare’s plays and invigorate the afterlife of his canon.

Building on this lasting trend, this paper belongs to the field of intermedial studies and specifically the study of remediations, defined as “the representation of one medium in another” (Bolter and Grusin). Combining close readings of the plays and formal analyses of extracts from broadcast performances, we will take into consideration the specific grammars of theatre and cinema to study the representation of otherworldly visions and supernatural phenomena in various performances of *Macbeth*, filmed at the Folger Theatre, the National Theatre, the Globe Theatre, the Royal Shakespeare Theatre and the Donmar Warehouse.

We will specifically investigate the way stage and film directors working hand in hand resolve the potentially conflicting interactions between showing and telling. When it comes to the staging and filming of horrid supernatural apparitions, has graphic explicitness superseded poetic suggestion appealing to the audience’s imagination to suit the tastes of modern audiences accustomed to the ostentatiously gruesome aesthetics of horror films? How are codes and conventions pertaining to contemporary film genres incorporated and are these assimilated in similar ways by different artists to define and/or renew the aesthetics of recorded theatrical performances? These questions will help us demonstrate that while literary afterlives retain “traces of the spirit of earlier literature” (Ellison, 381) they also challenge the aesthetic assumptions of the original work to merge high and low culture in new ways, and thus, ideally, to appeal to “model” spectators (De Marini, 166-167) comprising early modernists but also wider, heterogeneous audiences.

Fabrice Schultz is a lecturer at Université de Haute Alsace, Mulhouse, and a member of ILLE, Institut des Langues et littératures européennes. He studies 17th-century poetry and literature, linking theology, philosophy, science, aesthetics and poetics. His first monograph, entitled *Les Elancements du verbe* investigates images of spheres in the poetry of Richard Crashaw; it was published in March 2025. His current research project focuses on intermediality and, more specifically, on text-image collaborations in early modern literature, through the lens of illustrated poems and verse collections but also ‘live’ theatre broadcasts.

10:55

Discussion

11:15

Coffee Break

SESSION 3 | MATERIAL AND CULTURAL RE-INTERPRETATIONS

(Chair: Matthew Smith)

11:35

“The Life and Afterlives of *Tristram Shandy*: Literary Sculpture as a Signpost in a Multimodal Constellation”

Brigitte Friant-Kessler (Université Polytechnique Hauts-de-France)

Among visual reinterpretations of literature, sculpture appears to be somewhat neglected, bar perhaps busts or statues of famous authors, which form a special type of material *afterlives* in their own way. Recent publications have addressed the concept of afterlives in relation with eighteenth-century fiction (Cook & Seager, Lipski & Newbould, Saggini). A vast range of critics have amply discussed this specific aspect of Sterne’s reception and explored the variety of objects inspired by Sterne (De Voogd ed.), though mainly by focusing on his second piece of fiction, *A Sentimental Journey* as, for instance, with jewelry, or Staffordshire figures based on poor Maria. In comparison, *Tristram Shandy* has surprisingly yielded less such artefacts, except for the nineteenth-century Toby-Wadman pair, which became immensely popular and took its cue from C.R. Leslie’s iconic painting of the star-crossed couple in the 1840s.

Ceramic objects are endowed with something two-dimensional images lack, which is corporeality, multisensoriality and the different angles from which the viewer can exhibit them, view them and engage with them as artworks. If such an object is further treated as a literary afterlife, it is not only transmedial but it becomes multimodal (Kress), both on a semiotic and hermeneutic level. Literary ceramic thus testifies to how the body and the mind connect while reminiscing the text, either by citation, by individual memory or even participative reception (Jenkins). To borrow from a very Shandean fragment, I would further argue that this multimodality is present *ab ovo* in Sterne’s polycentric fiction but remains invisible, not to say imperceptible until it is transformed so as to become material and tangible.

My paper aims to explore what I name a “multimodal constellation”, which encompasses *aisthēsis*, that is a corporeal dynamics correlated to the interpretative function of afterlives. I will concentrate on the case study of “Filthy Trash”, a series of Shandean ceramics recently created by the contemporary British sculpture and potter Katryn Moye. By placing her work in a long lineage of decorative ceramics underpinned by literary works in Europe, the overarching argument regarding afterlives is that objects like Moye’s ceramic pieces contribute to enlarging the interpretative scope of Sterne’s fictional work. As part of the novel’s reception network, the individual artist’s eye, hand, emotional engagement and history, if not biography, equally call for attention. The convergence of media and artistic idiosyncracies navigating different aesthetic paradigms therefore point to a specific mode of response to the text, which is not only an additional piece of cultural heritage in its materiality but more broadly a literature-based practice without (almost) any words. The original text becomes paradoxically more and more spectral, yet somehow also fitter for survival.

Brigitte Friant-Kessler (LARSH – DeScripto) is emerita researcher at the Université Polytechnique Hauts-de-France, Valenciennes, where she taught visual culture, graphic literature and art history in English. Her research area is graphic arts. She has co-edited collected essays and journal issues on intermediality, transmediality, and tattoo. She has extensively published on illustration and adaptations, from eighteenth-century book illustration to comics and manga. Her publications as a Sterne scholar cover illustration, translation, political caricature, and Martin Rowson's graphic novel. As an amateur artist, she participates in drawing exhibitions, collaborative art shows and multimodal musical performances.

11:55

Literary Afterlives and Cultural Pilgrimage: In the Footsteps of Bernardin de Saint-Pierre on Mauritius Island

Christina Ionescu (Mount Allison University)

In the extensive preamble to the 1806 deluxe edition of *Paul et Virginie*, Bernardin de Saint-Pierre recounts receiving a handwritten account from a young man who had recently returned from the West Indies in which he relates that he rested on the old roots of the coconut tree planted at Paul's birth, that he walked in the Embrasure where his friend Virginie loved to climb, and that he encountered the black slave Domingue still weeping over their tragic passing. This constitutes the first known example of literary tourism on Mauritius Island undertaken in search of traces of a novelistic setting and fictional characters presented to the reader as real by an author who had travelled himself to that remote French colony located in the Indian Ocean east of Madagascar and for whom authenticity heightens reader engagement, builds trust, and deepens the emotional connection to the narrative and its moralistic undertones. Today, the myth of *Paul et Virginie* is commemorated throughout the island – for example, Prosper d'Épinay's statue of the youngsters crossing the stream in the forest can be admired in the Blue Penny Museum in Port-Louis; Suzanna Szemok's statue of Paul and Virginie is displayed in the courtyard of the Church of St. Francis of Assisi at Pamplemousses; and the fictitious tombs of the two figures are located in the Grapefruit Garden nearby. This paper examines examples of literary tourism in relation to visual and material afterlives, focusing on commemorative sculpture and public art that celebrate *Paul et Virginie* as part of national heritage. More specifically, it engages with the notion of literary afterlives to discuss how literary tourism bridges the gap between fiction and reality, allowing readers to immerse themselves in fictional worlds, blend the imagined world with physical reality, and connect with characters and narrative in edifying and emotional ways.

Christina Ionescu is Director and co-founder of the new Visual and Material Culture Studies Program at Mount Allison University in Canada. She is a *dix-huitiémiste* with an interest in book illustration, visual and material cultures, as well as word and image theory. She is the editor of a double issue of the *Journal of Illustration* on extra-illustration as a bibliographic and cultural phenomenon (2021) and co-editor of a special issue of 1650-1850: *Ideas, Inquiries, and Aesthetics in the Early Modern Era* on the cultural ramifications of water (2024). She is the co-editor, with Ann Lewis, of a volume titled *Illustration Studies: New Approaches, New Directions*, forthcoming from the EDUL (Éditions de l'Université de Lorraine) in the series *Book, Page, Text, Image*, and the co-organiser, with Nathalie Collé, Leigh G. Dillard, and Brigitte Friant-Kessler, of *Gulliver's Travels at 300: The Global Afterlives of a Bestseller in Print, Transmedial Adaptations, and Material Cultures*, an international symposium that will engage with the multifarious lives of this literary bestseller. Her journal articles have appeared in *Cahiers du GADGES, Image & Narrative, Le Livre et l'estampe, and Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies*, amongst other venues.

12:15

Discussion

12:35

Lunch on campus

SESSION 4 | LITERARY CLASSICS ON SCREEN

(Chair: Manon Küffer)

14:30

Andromeda's Afterlives: A Redefinition of Heroism in the Representations of Andromeda in 19th-Century British Art and the film *Damsel* (2024)

Rim Kanso (Université Bordeaux Montaigne)

A relatively forgotten figure herself, Andromeda is at the core of the 'damsel in distress' motif. Brought back to life from Antiquity through poetry, first by Ovid (*Metamorphoses, Book IV, Perseus and Andromeda*), then by Victorian poets – Charles Kingsley (*Andromeda and Other Poems, 1858*), William Morris (*The Doom of King Acrisius, 1873*), Gerard Manley Hopkins (*Andromeda, 1879*), and Robert Browning (the 'Andromeda motif' permeating many of his poems) –, Andromeda then appeared in iconographic form in the works of Victorian artists.

In a selection of these paintings, the maiden seems resilient and strong, contrary to the label of victim she had to endure for centuries. Painters such as Edward Poynter (*Andromeda, 1869*), Frederic Leighton (*Perseus and Andromeda, 1891*) and Edward Burne-Jones (*The Perseus Series, 1885-1888*), to name a few, produced various representations of the myth that foreground Andromeda for the first time, focusing on the female rather than the male hero. These re-imaginings offer an interstice that allows for a new reading of the myth and, by extension, a new identity for Andromeda. She can also be seen as a hero, based on a set of criteria emanating from new research on heroism, such as sacrifice, resilience and fortitude, far from the conventional definition of heroism, which is mainly based on physical strength.

The film included in this presentation, *Damsel* (2024), is a reimagined audiovisual representation of the Andromeda figure and motif. Despite having a different name, the heroine of the film is reminiscent of Andromeda: a maiden sacrificed for the good of the kingdom and its people, who suffers greatly on her journey toward her true self. A time-based medium, as opposed to a static image, offers a more detailed narrative articulation of the violence, suffering and resilience these women endure to break free from the chains of patriarchy and prescribed gender roles; Andromeda's *internal* journey thus becomes external, even literal. The film produces a new female model capable of rescuing herself by subverting the mythological motif and narrative. It offers an alternative ending—an answer to the question: what could have happened had Andromeda been given the tools that Perseus was given to become a hero?

Rim Kanso is a translator and researcher with Master's degrees in translation from Université Saint Joseph in Beirut and in English Studies from Université Bordeaux Montaigne. Currently pursuing a PhD, her research focuses on mythological feminine figures and their representations in British art during the Victorian era. Rim's work explores the intersection of mythology, gender and art history, shedding light on how these figures were depicted and their cultural significance in Victorian society, and offering a new reading of these representations through the lens of anthropology, psychology, gender and heroism studies.

14:50

“From Shelley to Del Toro: *Frankenstein's* Written Sound Come to Audiovisual (After)Life”

Lucie Ratail (Université de Lorraine)

Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* is a tale of eloquence and silence but also of sound and fury. Sounds, music and acoustic effects abound in each of the three narrative layers of the novel, which play with the notions of vibration, reverberation, conduction and absorption, plunging readers into an aural whirlwind. *Frankenstein's* artistic afterlives are so numerous that the original story has often been eclipsed by its adaptations and rewritings – its after-lives. Guillermo Del Toro's version of the tale has often been praised for some of its most faithful aspects, among which its structure, its framed narrative, its eloquent Creature and its dehumanised Victor. One could add to the list its subtle use of silence, of acousmatic sound, and of stressful music, building a continuity between the aural textual sonic evocation and the real audiovisual acoustic renditions in the film. Nevertheless, the adaptation leaves out some of the most iconic sonorous scenes of the novel, notably the archetypal sounds of the Alps, the Orkney Islands and Switzerland, the shouts of the Creature's victims, and the De Lacey's music playing. Beyond the apparent faithful unfaithfulness of Del Toro's *Frankenstein* to Shelley's novel, a subsequent, more relevant question is raised: the Gothic being a genre based on effect and affect, does sound play a similar role in both the original and the afterlife? In other words, to what extent can it be said that, because Del Toro's *Frankenstein* is an adaptation, his own sonic choices imply similar functional purposes to those in Shelley's novel? To answer these questions, the paper will first highlight the main sonic effects and purposes in Mary Shelley's novel, before comparing them with Del Toro's own acoustic strategies, in order to conclude on a conceptual consideration of the role of sound in text and in film.

Lucie Ratail has a PhD in British literature. She teaches at Université de Lorraine as a PRAG. Her research focuses on sound objects and their dynamic impact on the phenomenology of Gothic stories. Her interests include soundscapes and acoustics, sensation and perception, memory and imagination, metaphor and realism. She has published several articles on soundscapes, sound strategies and the phenomenology of perception in famous Gothic stories, especially in *The Mysteries of Udolpho* and in Edgar Allan Poe's short stories. Her last publications consider adaptations of these original Gothic stories through the prism of intermediality, and study the impact of transmediality on sound's narrative and decorative functions.

15:10

“Gulliver's Chariot and Car Wash: An Advertising Crossover ‘Intelligently Built for the Size of your Life?’”

Ruth Menzies (Aix-Marseille Université)

This paper will undertake a further exploration of the myriad ways in which advertisers appropriate and adapt imagery from Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* (1726), through a presentation and analysis of a two-part series of television commercials which was produced in 2012 to market the 2013 Acura RDX. According to Acura (Honda's luxury division, which primarily sells cars in North America and a handful of other countries), the short clips, entitled “Chariot” and “Car Wash”, show “a modern day Gulliver held captive by the tiny inhabitants of Lilliput”. The starting point for the first commercial is the iconic image of Gulliver lying on a beach, tied down by ropes and surrounded by a crowd of tiny Lilliputians. However, the advert quickly diverts from Swift's narrative, portraying a power dynamic between Gulliver and his hosts that – while it is arguably as shifting as that depicted by Swift – bears little direct or recognisable relation to the hypotext. Furthermore, the adverts revolve around the traveller's keen desire to return home and the Lilliputians' equally and inexplicably keen desire to retain him in their country,

elements that do not feature in Gulliver's first voyage in the *Travels*. Equally notably, both adverts rely heavily upon a form of tongue-in-cheek irony, that differs markedly from Swift's caustic satire, and on a striking blurring of geographic, temporal and technological boundaries, which results in a rather disorientating combination of the pseudo-historical and the highly contemporary.

In this paper, I will address some of the ways in which these adverts combine a narrative and iconography relating to Gulliver, which are likely to have originated not only (if at all) with Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*, but also with one or more other sources, to weave together a complex series of thematic threads, under a campaign slogan that exemplifies how thinly those threads, as well as both visual and verbal rhetoric, can at times be stretched in the afterlives of literary texts.

Ruth Menzies is Senior Lecturer in the Department of Anglophone Studies at Aix-Marseille University, where she teaches translation and literature and is affiliated to the LERMA research group. She is currently joint editor-in-chief of the Anglophone Studies journal *e-Rea*.

15:30

Discussion

15:50

Coffee Break

SESSION 5 | SOCIAL-MEDIATING THE CLASSICS

(Chair: Christopher Craig)

16:15

“Belle as the ‘OG Book Girlie’: *Iconizing* a Classic Fairy Tale Character, from Disney to BookTok”

Adèle Hoareau (Sorbonne Université)

In the last few years, readers have used social media, especially Tik Tok and Instagram, to share their favorite books through reviews, theories and creative content. Among these fan favorites, one fairy tale character is considered as the “OG book girlie”: Belle from “Beauty and the Beast”. It seems that, on social media – through fanarts, film clips and memes – Belle has come to epitomize the figure of the female reader. More specifically, it is Disney's version of her character that appears in these “iconic” re-creations. But how exactly does a fictional character become a cultural icon?

According to Wojcik, Picard and Höfer, there are two main criteria for iconicity: “iteration” and the “(re-)creation of cultural value”. Moreover, they consider that iconicity can apply to a multitude of objects beyond mere images, such as quotations or characters. To become an icon, a character has to live a life of its own on different

media as well as in real life, through physical objects (merchandising, tattoos etc.), making it a common reference for a specific audience. This definition seems well-suited to explain how characters, like Sherlock Holmes – or in this case, Belle – become recognizable entities outside their original text and context. It also emphasizes the role that adaptation –defined by Hutcheon as “a form of repetition without replication³”– plays in this “iconizing” process. Without adaptations, a cultural object cannot become an icon.

In this paper, I would like to demonstrate how Disney's reconfiguration of Belle as a reader illustrates the multifaceted afterlives of a character through the process of “iconizing” as described by Wojcik *et al.* Firstly, Disney's depiction of Belle as a reader has become a “key identifier⁴” of her character. This feature is replicated and adapted in the subsequent retellings of “Beauty and the Beast”, such as Alex Flinn's *Beastly* (2007) or Stephenie Meyer's *Twilight* saga (2005-2020). Consequently, this leads us to consider the way Belle seems to have conquered cultural value on social media as she embodies the figure of the female reader, a role every woman reader – especially those of romance and fantasy romance – can identify with. From the classic fairy tale to social media memes and content, Disney's Belle appears to have reached the status of a pop-culture icon. I would argue that this process of “iconizing” is one of the most striking “afterlives” of literary classics, as Belle's example clearly illustrates.

Adèle Hoareau is a PhD student at Sorbonne University. She is a member of two research groups, VALE, *Voix Anglophones, Littérature et Esthétique* and CRLC, *Centre de Recherche en Littérature comparée*. Her dissertation focuses on the study of mainstream adaptations of Beauty and the Beast, and combines gender and reception studies, pop culture and adaptation theories. Her first article, “Eros as the Virgin Vampire: Monsters, Desires and Female Erotic Curiosity in the *Twilight* series, a retelling of Cupid and Psyche” was published in the academic journal *Alizés* (Université de La Réunion) in 2024.

16:35

“Survival of the ‘Fittest’: Re-Inventing the Figure of Mr. Darcy for Audiences’ Pleasure”

Claire Pascal (Sorbonne Université)

This paper delves into the afterlives of Jane Austen's novel *Pride and Prejudice*, through the case study of one of its most emblematic characters, Mr. Darcy, and the ways in which his representation has evolved through audio-visual adaptations. Mr. Darcy seems to be, more than anything else, one of the major elements around which the Jane Austen canon has been established and reshaped, and the expectations surrounding his on-screen embodiment as a sex symbol have largely gone beyond the depiction provided by the novelist.

From Laurence Olivier's Byronic interpretation in 1940 (MGM's *Pride and Prejudice*), to Conrad Ricamora's gay Filipino-American reimagining in 2022 (*Fire Island*), the figure of Mr. Darcy seems to have undergone extensive reinventions. The character has become, over the last few decades, a fertile ground for the projection and reproduction of the audiences' period-specific fantasies and desires, emerging as a highly romanticised lead whose physicality is extensively exhibited, to the point of eclipsing his traditional attributes (namely his wealth and handsome estate). The shift towards a highly sexualised Darcy can be traced to Andrew Davies's 1995 television adaptation of the novel, and more particularly to the now-legendary episode in which Colin Firth comes out of a lake in a wet white shirt.

¹*Beauty and the Beast*. Directed by Gary Trousdale and Kirk Wise, Walt Disney Pictures, Silver Screen Partners IV, Walt Disney Animation Studios, 1991.

²Wojcik, Paula, et al., éditeurs. *Iconizing of Literature, Art, Humanities, and Science: Intermediality and Value in Popular Culture*. 1st ed. 2025, Springer Nature Switzerland, 2025, p 5.

³Hutcheon, Linda. *A Theory of Adaptation*. Routledge, 2006, p xvi.

⁴Kemp, Martin, *Christ to Coke: How Image Becomes Icon*. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2011, p 3.

The iconic ‘lake scene’ has become one of the expected motifs in *Pride and Prejudice* adaptations, prompting many producers to make nods to it in order to satisfy the audiences' fetishization of the man. Sexualisation strategies are now an integral aspect of Darcy's on-screen identity, to the point that even the most conservative of producers, such as the American Hallmark Channel, have their Darcy go topless in front of Elizabeth Bennet. The fidelity of the adaptations to screen-generated scenes and concepts that have already seduced the audiences effectively turn Darcy into a palimpsest of elements that have survived the process of ‘cultural selection,’ even though they are nowhere to be found in the novel.

These audio-visuals transformations, and their dissemination beyond the screen into popular culture, thus raise the question of what form tomorrow's Mr. Darcy might take. The pervasiveness of ‘Darcymania’ across cultural spheres, especially social media, leads to a constant reappropriation and re-creation of the character, as the identity ‘Mr. Darcy’ lends itself to a layering of different features imagined by the fans. The character seems to become an echo of itself, a protean ideal of manliness that subsequently haunts other period dramas as a highly referential figure of intrinsic desirability for male leads.

Claire Pascal is an English Agrégation holder and a second-year PhD student at Sorbonne Université. She is a member of the research group VALE, *Voix Anglophones, Littérature et Esthétique*. Under the supervision of Pr. Alexis Tadié, her research examines the political evolutions and reappropriations found in the adaptations of Jane Austen's work. Her thesis is entitled ‘The Politics of Adaptation: Conservative and Progressive Tendencies in the Rewritings and Audiovisual Adaptations of Jane Austen's Novels, from 1995 until Today’.

16:55

Discussion

17:15

CONCLUDING REMARKS

19:00

Dinner in town

The [Afterlives of Literary Classics Website](#) :



Research Unit [IDEA Website](#) :



SAIT
SOCIÉTÉ ANGLICISTE
ARTS, IMAGES, TEXTES

8:30

9:00

9:15

10:15

10:15

11:15

11:15

11:35

12:35

12:35

14:30

15:50

15:50

16:15

17:15

17:15

19:00

PROGRAMME OF THE SYMPOSIUM

27TH MARCH 2025
SALLE G04, CAMPUS LETTRES ET SCIENCES
HUMAINES | NANCY

WELCOME & COFFEE

INTRODUCTION

NATHALIE COLLÉ (IDEA) & PAULINE SCHWALLER (IDEA)

SESSION 1 | LITERARY CLASSICS ON STAGE (CHAIR: TONY S. BAY)

9:15 - "REWORKING GREAT CLASSICS OF ENGLISH AND AMERICAN LITERATURE THROUGH PERFORMATIVE READING AND REWRITING: A DRAMATIC, DIDACTIC AND LINGUISTIC-SEMIOTIC PERSPECTIVE"

JEAN-REMI LAPAIRE (UNIVERSITE BORDEAUX MONTAIGNE)

9h35 - "ABSALOM, ABSALOM ON THE CONTEMPORARY STAGE: WILLIAM FAULKNER AND EDOUARD GLISSANT IN CONVERSATION"
SOPHIE MARIÉJOLIS-KOCH (UNIVERSITE TOULOUSE JEAN JAURES)

9:55 - DISCUSSION

SESSION 2 | (RE)STAGING SHAKESPEARE (CHAIR: BARBARA MULLER)

10:15 - "VERS LE SPECTRE: ON HAMLET AND THE AFTERLIFE, ON HAMLET'S AFTERLIFE AND AUTISM"

WILLIAM MCKENZIE (UNIVERSITE CATHOLIQUE DE L'OUEST)

10h35 - "O HORROR, HORROR, HORROR!" (MACBETH 2.3.68): SCREENING THE SUPERNATURAL IN THEATRE
BROADCASTS OF SHAKESPEARE'S PLAYS"

FABRICE SCHULTZ (UNIVERSITE DE HAUTE ALSACE)

10:55 - DISCUSSION

COFFEE BREAK

SESSION 3 | MATERIAL AND CULTURAL RE-INTERPRETATIONS (CHAIR: MATTHEW SMITH)

11:35 - "THE LIFE AND AFTERLIVES OF *TRISTRAM SHANDY*: LITERARY SCULPTURE AS A SIGNPOST IN A MULTIMODAL CONSTELLATION"

BRIGITTE FRIANT-KESSLER (UNIVERSITE POLYTECHNIQUE HAUTS-DE-FRANCE)

11:55 - "LITERARY AFTERLIVES AND CULTURAL PILGRIMAGE: IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF BERNARDIN DE SAINT-PIERRE ON MAURITIUS ISLAND"
CHRISTINA IONESCU (MOUNT ALLISON UNIVERSITY)

12:15 - DISCUSSION

LUNCH ON CAMPUS

SESSION 4 | LITERARY CLASSICS ON SCREEN (CHAIR: MARGIN KOTTE)

14:30 - "REDEFINING HEROISM IN THE ICONOGRAPHIC AND AUDIO-VISUAL AFTERLIVES OF ANDROMEDA IN THE 19TH-CENTURY ART OF GREAT BRITAIN AND 21ST-CENTURY CINEMA"

RIM KANSO (UNIVERSITE BORDEAUX MONTAIGNE)

14:50 - "FROM SHELLEY TO DEL TORO: *FRANKENSTEIN'S* WRITTEN SOUND COME TO AUDIOVISUAL (AFTER)LIFE"

LUCIE RATAIL (UNIVERSITE DE LOIRRAINE)

15:10 - "GULLIVER'S CHARIOT AND CAR WASH: AN ADVERTISING CROSSOVER 'INTELLIGENTLY BUILT FOR THE SIZE OF YOUR LIFE?'"

RUTH MENZIES (AIX-MARSEILLE UNIVERSITE)

15:30 - DISCUSSION

COFFEE BREAK

SESSION 5 | SOCIAL-MEDIATING THE CLASSICS (CHAIR: CHRISTOPHER CRAIG)

16:15 - "BELLE AS THE 'OG BOOK GIRLIE': ICONIZING A CLASSIC FAIRY TALE CHARACTER, FROM DISNEY TO BOOKTOK"
ADELE HOAREAU (SORBONNE UNIVERSITE)

16:35 - "SURVIVAL OF THE 'FITTEST': RE-INVENTING THE FIGURE OF MR. DARCY FOR AUDIENCES' PLEASURE"

CLAIRE PASCAL (SORBONNE UNIVERSITE)

16:55 - DISCUSSION

17:15 - CONCLUDING REMARKS

DINNER IN TOWN