

Dennis CATCHINS, Laurence RAW, and James M. WELSH, editors.

The Pedagogy of Adaptation. Scarecrow, 2010.

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The editors of this collection of papers deserve congratulations for creating a valuable, ground-breaking resource for teaching adaptation at the university level. It represents a timely intervention in adaptation studies, written from the teachers' point of view. It is ground-breaking in the sense that, at the time of its first publication, it was the first collection dedicated solely to the pedagogy of adaptation. More than anything, it provides explanation on why adaptation studies should be taught as a separate discipline, like film studies are. With contributors from different areas of education within the United States, the collection offers a wide range of essays treating adaptation from different points of view. Starting with the introduction dedicated to the rationale behind teaching adaptation as well as its use in the classroom, *The Pedagogy of Adaptation* highlights the fact that adaptation is a creative process in which the source text, although it doubtless is an inspiration, ceases to be the focus, along with fidelity, now widely contested as the least relevant of adaptation's features.

Thomas Leitch offers a good review essay at the beginning on "How to Teach Film Adaptation, and Why." Leitch is very much in favour of letting students develop their own creative approaches to adaptation by changing the source-texts and producing their own versions. This he identified as essential to the creative process that lies at the heart of adaptation. The source-texts can be studied for as long as possible, but he believes that learners should have the chance to exercise their own talents. This is perhaps not so much the case at high schools, where teachers might need to provide more information.

In "Frankenstein's Monstrous Influences: Investigating Film Adaptations in Secondary Schools," Nathan Phillips offers an approach of lectures mixed with limited creative activities, but does not recommend group approaches. While this may work in Phillips' immediate high school context, this kind of approach seems to limit rather than improve creativity. Adaptations should be experimented with as a way of understanding how the transformative processes work; otherwise the learners will not appreciate the complex process of rendering a novel into a film.

Natalie James Loper's "Adapting Composition, Arguing Adaptation: Using Adaptation in the Composition Classroom" uses adaptation in the composition classroom. Sometimes, composition can turn out to be a boring class, with learners asked to "be creative" in the broadest sense without any real guide as to what it involves. This is where adaptation comes in; by reading a literary text first, and then producing a composition, learners have some kind of template to work with. They do not have to reproduce it – they can produce entirely different compositions should they wish – but they get a better idea of the style they might use.

Katrina Bondari has perhaps the most difficult task as she explains the process of teaching Aristophanes via *South Park*. The prospect of working with a Latin author and a modern American text sounds horrific, one that would probably be beyond the knowledge of most teachers, but Bondari shows admirable fortitude in providing example after example of how the technique works. Some of her connections seem a little tenuous, but the way she uses a popular television program to teach classical literature is admirable.

There are also problematic points in the collection. For example, some of the material has dated slightly since this book appeared in 2010. James M. Welsh might have been one of the founders of adaptation studies in the late 1960s, but his piece stressing the importance of fidelity seems to hark back to the 1980s rather than look forward. These are the days of online communication, of fan fictions produced both professionally as well as by amateurs, and of the production of different versions of classical texts. With the range of opportunities expanding, it becomes more and more difficult to defend fidelity or advocate it as an important feature of an adaptation.

Readers might be better advised to consult Jennifer M. Jeffers' essay on the adaptation of classics, "Life without a Primary Text: The Hydra in Adaptation Studies," which argues that classics have become so popular that it is difficult to trace an identifiable "source-text." Thus, the recent *Pride and Prejudice* adaptations have more to do with previous adaptations than with the Austen text, despite what the screenplay writers claim in interviews about their determination to remain close to the source-text. With a film like *Jane Austen and Zombies*, the source-text is completely different.

Other chapters in the book concentrate on a variety of more specific topics – for example teaching Herman Melville, or *The Stepford Wives*. Even if the

readers will not be teaching these particular texts, the essays contain valuable examples of methods that can be readily transferred to other texts and classrooms. A wide range of approaches to adaptation by experts in disciplines, such as language, film, literature, and theatre, embody the idea of plurality, creativity, and uniqueness fostered by adaptation study as a discipline. Moreover, the essays can be used as help in planning classes, which makes this collection a welcome contribution both to the field of adaptation studies and to the methodologies of teaching language, literature, and even creative writing as adapting texts develops students' literacy, critical thinking, creativity, and a whole range of other skills, depending on the approach taken.

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