

SERCIA Conference 2018, Vaxjo, Sweden

Gilles Menegaldo,

Emeritus professor of American literature and film studies, University of Poitiers

Abstract

***The Prestige*, From Text to Screen (Christopher Priest, Christopher Nolan)**

The Prestige (1995), a novel by Christopher Priest, was adapted by Christopher Nolan, in 2006. The novel tells the story of a long-standing feud between two stage magicians in the late 19th century and its tragic consequences for the protagonists and their descendants. Priest uses a complex narrative structure, mostly based on the diaries of the two rivals, with a consistent use of flashbacks and the interweaving of a contemporary frame narrative. The novel deals with obsession, paranoia, spectacular magic tricks and secrecy but it also foregrounds the role of science or pseudo science with the part played by the famous and controversial Nikola Tesla.

Nolan's adaptation dispenses with the frame narrative and changes many elements of the plot while keeping the main thematic aspects of the novel and the same mood. The film uses indeed a strategy of suspense and secrecy and disseminates significant signs, both verbal and visual, which may help the spectator to unravel some enigmas, but these signs are generally overlooked on first seeing the film. Nolan manages to convey the mood of the period and the fascination exercised by these magic tricks on the attending audiences, also pointing to the potential dangers involved, but he also offers a meta-textual reflexion on the powers of the filmic medium which enables him to manipulate the filmic spectator. We shall examine first the main transformations (suppression, addition, displacement, amplification) carried out by Nolan on the literary source, then the narrative and formal devices (especially lighting, sound, editing) by means of which Nolan manages to convey some of the magic of the original work while extolling the cinematic art. ´

Short bio:

Gilles Menegaldo is an emeritus professor of American literature and film studies at the University of Poitiers. Founder of the Film Studies Department. He has published many articles on gothic literature and film genre. Book: *Dracula, la noirceur et la grâce* (with AM Paquet-Deyris, 2006). As editor or co-editor, 30 collections of essays among which: *Frankenstein*

(1999), *HP Lovecraft, mythes et modernité* (2002), *R. L. Stevenson et A. Conan Doyle* (2003, with JP Naugrette), *Dracula* (Sept. 2005), *Jacques Tourneur* (2006), *Film and History* (2008), *Manières de Noir* (On Crime Fiction), 2010, *Gothic NEWS*, 2011, *Persistances gothiques dans la littérature et les arts de l'image*, (2012), *European and Hollywood Cinema: Cultural Exchanges*, 2012. Latest books as editor: *Le western et les mythes de l'ouest* (with L. Guillaud), UP Rennes, 2015, *Sherlock Holmes, un limier pour le XXIème siècle* (with H. Machinal et J-P Naugrette, UP Rennes, 2016), *Lovecraft au prisme de l'image* (with C. Gelly) 2017 (le Visage vert), *Tim Burton, a Cinema of Transformations* (UP Montpellier, Feb. 2018).