

Dr. Jean-Baptiste Chantoiseau

Université de la Sorbonne-Nouvelle (Paris 3)

jbchantoiseau@yahoo.fr

+ 33 6 73 90 24 80

Title: Beyond Words. The seductive power of images in three New Yorkese adaptations.

Abstract (500 words):

The “fidelity debate” to a source text is often at the very heart of film analysis dedicated to adaptations for the silver screen. However, such an approach doesn't pay justice to the crucial and delicate “adaptation process” highlighted by Lynda Hutcheon (*A Theory of Adaptation*, London/NY, Routledge, 2013). Indeed a source text, whatever it could be, is always re-located and re-enacted in a fresh new cinematic and visual context during the “adaptation process”. The various links between the visual universe of a novel and the visual universe of the film derived from it should be studied more closely. Then several strategies could be identified for a better understanding of the challenges raised by this visual process.

Sometimes, a film seems to be aimed at restoring, in a mimetic way, the "visual consumption" (Jonathan Crary, *Techniques of the Observer. On vision and modernity in the Nineteenth Century*, Massachusetts institute of technology, 1990) proper to a novel and to its time, opting for an “aesthetics of connivance”. In order to keep the sensation awake, other adaptations deliberately reinterpret and extend the visual culture of the source text to avoid the pitfalls of museification. Finally, some artists favor a more radical "cultural shock"; finding, with the visual culture of their time, a fruitful dynamic to blast and energise the original fiction, introducing a kind of "rhetorical breach."

Restitution, intensification, explosion: such possibilities could be illustrated by three films in which New York is the cultural and visual common ground. Blake Edwards' *Breakfast at Tiffany's* (1961) presents a relationship to objects, advertising and consumption that reflects a modern cultural life made of loneliness and interchangeability; universe faithful to the novel (1958) by Truman Capote. With *The Age of Innocence* (1993), Martin Scorsese appropriates the visual culture of the 1870 New York society while extending its codes: from purely ornamental in Edith Wharton's fiction (1920), the artistic representations become, in the film, an iconic sign and an invitation to transgress. Last but not least, with his 2013 adaptation of *The Great Gatsby* (1925) by Francis Scott Fitzgerald, Baz Luhrmann creates a plastic universe in which a hyper-contemporary visual culture keeps the beat. In this way, the director hopes to be in touch with the expectations of a modern spectator who always claims for more interactions. These examples demonstrate the true power of visual interpretation; a power capable of shaking any literary soil as solid or classic as it is.

5 key-words: adaptation process; Visual Studies; Intermediality; New York; transgression

Short bio (120 words): Jean-Baptiste Chantoiseau is a Junior Lecturer in Cinema Theory, Film Studies and Aesthetics at the Sorbonne-Nouvelle University. He also teaches at Paris 13 University Fine Arts books History and Production. Editor of the Musée Rodin, he has supervised dozens of publications and translations from English to French (and conversely), including *Kiefer-Rodin* with the Barnes Foundation (2017) or *Mapplethorpe-Rodin* (2014). His Ph.D *Thwarting Transgression. From Dandyism to terrorism: Images in Literature, Art and Film* (2011) has given birth to many publications on Robert Bresson (Presses universitaires de France, 2013), Pier Paolo Pasolini's Intermediality (Peter Lang, 2014), Jean Genet (Champ Vallon 2014) or Jim Jarmusch (Presses universitaires d'Arras, 2017). His first novel, *La Chambre blanche* (HD, 2014) is being translated into English.