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Condensation Recondensed
Memory Regimes in Film Adaptations
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Les régimes de mémoires dans l'adaptation cinématographique

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Article abstract

Adaptations are, in a sense, multi-layered vehicles for memories of literary (or other) originals. The audience's memories of different media versions of the classic text coexist, compete and converge, creating an extensive multi-dimensional experience. How does their memory work when readers become viewers (or vice versa) and recondense many ideas, images, and feelings linked to specific narrative worlds? The paper centres around two metaphors for memory regimes – present explicitly or implicitly – in contemporary adaptation studies. The regime of a palimpsest is based on the organic memory; it describes the individual perception of narratives: the memory of the viewer or the reader activates the intertextual "richness" of the adaptation, comparing/juxtaposing/merging different media versions of one narrative world. The regime of a network regulates the "life" of narratives in collective/cultural memory, the way meaning is ascribed to particular stories throughout the centuries, and the mechanisms of production and dissemination of narratives by the cultural industries. Metaphors help elaborate on the differentiation between the individual and the collective, the fixed and the fluid in the process of adapting, between the conventional and the contingent. Through the analyses of four film adaptations of Romeo and Juliet and a recent TV series, using the tragedy's motifs, this paper shows how the network regime uncovers ways to make the viewer's memory "get side-tracked", and recall what the viewer is unlikely to remember. Via networks adaptations make their audiences remember "prosthetically" and learn more about "real" spaces with their real problems, while being initially trapped into viewing by the familiarity of old fictional stories.

Condensation Recondensed: Memory Regimes in Film Adaptation

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ABSTRACT

Adaptations are, in a sense, multi-layered vehicles for memories of literary (or other) originals. The audience's memories of different media versions of the classic text coexist, compete and converge, creating an extensive multi-dimensional experience. How does their memory work when readers become viewers (or vice versa) and recondense many ideas, images, and feelings linked to specific narrative worlds? The paper centres around two metaphors for memory regimes – present explicitly or implicitly – in contemporary adaptation studies. The regime of a palimpsest is based on the organic memory; it describes the individual perception of narratives: the memory of the viewer or the reader activates the intertextual "richness" of the adaptation, comparing / juxtaposing / merging different media versions of one narrative world. The regime of a network regulates the "life" of narratives in collective / cultural memory, the way meaning is ascribed to particular stories

throughout the centuries, and the mechanisms of production and dissemination of narratives by the cultural industries. Metaphors help elaborate on the differentiation between the individual and the collective, the fixed and the fluid in the process of adapting, between the conventional and the contingent. Through the analyses of four film adaptations of Romeo and Juliet *and a recent TV series, using the tragedy's motifs, this paper shows how the network regime uncovers ways to make the viewer's memory "get side-tracked", and recall what the viewer is unlikely to remember. Via networks adaptations make their audiences remember "prosthetically" and learn more about "real" spaces with their real problems, while being initially trapped into viewing by the familiarity of old fictional stories.*

Introduction

In the contemporary media environment, literature (or, more precisely, the literary narrative) exists in various extended forms, film adaptation being one of them. Adaptations are, in a sense, multi-layered vehicles for memories of the literary (or other) originals. The audience's memories of different media versions of the classic text coexist, compete, and converge, creating an extensive multi-dimensional experience. When readers become viewers (or vice versa), they enter the territory of condensation – of many ideas, images, and feelings linked to specific narrative worlds.

We read about condensation in Astrid Erll's book *Memory in Culture* that it is "arguably the main characteristic of literature" (2011, p. 145): "One of the major effects of literary forms, such as metaphor, allegory, symbolism, and intertextuality, is the bringing together and superimposition of various semantic fields in a very small space" (2011, p. 145). A shift from literature to its screen double (film adaptation) allows for engagement with the question to continue what is a filmic condensation of an already condensed literary memory?

This need to recondense, or recollect, the fragmented elements of the old narratives in our minds is discussed in Mikhail Iampolski's *The Memory of Tiresias: Intertextuality and Film* (1998). The ideal reader of any text is not unlike Tiresias: in the "darkness of memory" the images "come loose from their contexts, forming new combinations, superimposing themselves on each other or finding their sameness" (1998, p. 3). The reader or the viewer is actively engaged in uniting a text out of many separate images of culture. Iampolski further emphasizes how memory plays a key role in this process, as do different ways of activating or eliminating memories observing that, "(n)ovelty and tradition enter into a dynamic fusion that is to a large extent responsible for the production of new meanings. In essence the production of meaning is resolved in this 'struggle' of memory and the way it is overcome" (1998, p. 9).

This dynamic is evident in the ability of the new narratives (filmic versions of novels, videogames based on films, *etc.*) to shape our images of the previous ones and replace them in our minds while imposing new contextually bound meanings upon them. When we think of memory regimes in the adapting process, we observe two issues to focus on: the simultaneous co-existence, in our memory, of the old and the new variations, and the erasure of the old by the new in our forgetting.

This paper focuses on two metaphors – a palimpsest and a network – which help to comprehend the ways viewers of film adaptations process familiar narratives in audiovisual media formats. These metaphors exist explicitly and implicitly in contemporary adaptation studies and are linked to both individual and collective memory levels. Each metaphor is better suited for a particular level with the palimpsest metaphor suiting the individual organic memory and the network metaphor aligning with the collective.

The "network regime" is of special interest because an ever-growing network structure allows for thinking of the adaptation as a kind of "garden of forking paths" (to use Jorge Luis Borges' image), in which one risks getting side-tracked and losing sight of the main road. Adapting the text to a new milieu can privilege the context to such a degree that the audience will have to venture into new and unknown territories instead of safely following the familiar routes of the classic narratives. In this essay, different cinematic reworkings of *Romeo and Juliet* will demonstrate how unpredictable contexts make us remember what we never knew about and visit territories we never set foot on. Adaptations of *Romeo and Juliet* show how networks facilitate the work of "prosthetic memory" (that is, ways of engaging with reality) which transcend our lived experience. This essay maintains that two basic memory regimes (the palimpsest and the network) are in action while we process different adaptations. The network regime is particularly illuminated by the notion of "prosthetic memory". An adaptation being part of an extended network has a unique cultural function – to make us remember and feel prosthetically while relying upon the comforts of old stories.

Palimpsests, Networks, and Beyond

The "palimpsest regime" is particularly relevant when the viewer is acquainted with the narrative in some other *medium* form (for instance, if they have read the novel before watching the film or seen many actors in the same role). This kind of engagement presupposes that we are intrigued by actively holding several texts in our minds and are preoccupied with some comparative juxtaposition of them, with seen-before, read-before, half-remembered, half-forgotten, half-recollected.

Linda Hutcheon is using the controlling palimpsest metaphor in *A Theory of Adaptation* (2006; 2012) to describe the specificity of the viewer's engagement with film versions of the old stories. Her vocabulary is at once very accurate and yet poetic as she argues that adaptations are "haunted" by prior works (2006, p. 25), the pleasure of experiencing adaptations is a "doubled pleasure" (2006, p. 116).

The doubleness of adaptations is "enriching" (2006, p. 139) and its loyalty to present contexts of creation and perception bestows it with an "aura" (2006, p. 6) of its own. Optional ways to conceptualize adaptations are scattered all over Hutcheon's text, creating a wide-ranging set of potential tools and controlling metaphors. For instance, the palimpsest metaphor is not a stable construct, which presupposes multilaminated-ness and richness of experience, but also a regime of reading / viewing, which is linked to oblivion and erasure in the process of perception. Every new layer (new adaptation) not only reminds the audience of the old stories or previous perceptions of these stories but also reminds us of the fact of not remembering – the story, the previous perception, the first impression, the first reading, and the fresh encounter with the narrative world. When there is so much cultural condensation, what can we say with certainty about our own first reading? A nostalgic view of this inability to recall the initial encounter with any narrative is described by Hutcheon when she quotes the fans of *The Lord of the Rings* and the *Harry Potter* novels: "Now that I know what an enemy orc or a game of Quidditch (can) look like (from the movies), I suspect I will never be able to recapture my first imagined versions again" (2006, p. 29). The palimpsestic engagement of the viewer is full of both – gains and losses.

The palimpsest regime reveals its explanatory potential when we think of narratives, which have a limited, accessible for non-artificial intelligence, number of different media versions. For instance, Denis Villeneuve's *Dune: Part One* (2021) unfolds in a mind-expanding way after one rewatches David Lynch's *Dune* (1984), improving one's ability to juggle the versions, to embrace diverse representations of the same narrative world. Infantile and emotional *new* Paul Atreides (Timothee Chalamet) coexists in the viewer's memory with Kyle MacLachlan's more reserved and virile protagonist, Max von Sydow's Liet-Kynes paradoxically shines through Sharon Duncan-Brewster's black woman warrior, and Feyd played by Sting (in Lynch's version) will haunt Austin Butler's 2023 performance of the same character (*Dune: Part Two*).

Unlike Hutcheon, Robert Stam in *Literature Through Film: Realism, Magic, and the Art of Adaptation* (2005) seems more interested in expanding the palimpsest metaphor's potential socio-culturally. He tests the applicability of the idea of multilayeredness to temporality and identity. For instance, "the palimpsestic time" (2005, p. 346) is an instrument to analyze historical and cultural experiences, in which the characteristic traits of different epochs or periods (Indigenous, colonial, and postcolonial) coexist in everyday life. Stam focuses on a Portuguese-Brazilian director Ruy Guerra's *Erendira* (script written by Colombian novelist Gabriel García Márquez) to prove via the idea of palimpsestic, superimposed

temporalities that the Latin-American experience occurs in "a transtemporal tropical nowhere land" (2005, p. 346). The notion of palimpsestic identity promotes an awareness of the role of the multiple, the complex, and the hybrid in the construction of self-understanding and self-presentation. A Brazilian writer and musicologist Mário de Andrade exemplifies this notion of a self-declared complexity of identity: "at once indigenous, African, and European, through ancestry, French through his schooling, and Italian because of his love of music" (2005, p. 328). The viewer's awareness of these complexities becomes even more significant when we think of film adaptations. Palimpsestic spectatorial experience is combined with the hybridity of the discussed themes – the past and the present co-exist paradoxically or conflictingly and mixed identities combine the inherited and the acquired, the real and the re-imagined.

Another type of engagement might be called a "network memory regime". It applies to archetypal narratives, which span hundreds of years and are inaccessible for a standard non-artificial intelligence to process. The narrative networks belong to the realm of collective memory. The Vampire / Dracula / Nosferatu stories have existed for centuries and do exist in the contemporary cultural landscape in multiple *media* formats, which I would not dare to de-layer or unpack[1]. It is a mega cultural archive – much more than individuals can keep in their memories. Adaptations here serve as tools of prosthetic memory which help the audience cope with the stories hardly-ever-seen, hardly-ever-read, hardly-ever-recollected.

The network metaphor appears in many already classic sources on the adaptation theory. When narratologist Brian McFarlane turns to the network metaphor in his book *Novel to Film. An Introduction to the Theory of Adaptation*, he writes about "an intricate network of personal and scriptwriting relationships" (1996, p. 35), which are at work during the adaptive process. Network creation for McFarlane – from his narratological perspective – is a process of interventions of several textual versions between the original and the final text. For Hutcheon, on the other hand, the term "rhizomatic networking" of texts (2006, p. 56) is a synonym for Genette's hypertext (1982) – a mega phenomenon, which permits yet another approach to conceptualizing adaptation as a type of intertextuality.

The ideas of intertextual rhizomes in the adapting process proved extremely fruitful in several directions. The rhizomatic network structures are

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[1] See, for example, *Dracula in Visual Media: Film, Television, Comic Book and Electronic Game Appearances, 1921—2010*, ed. by John Edgar Browning and Caroline Joan Picart, Jefferson: McFarland & Company, 2011.

discussed in Simone Murray's *The Adaptation Industry* (2012), Kate Newell's *Expanding Adaptation Networks: From Illustration to Novelization* (2017), and Lissette Lopez Szwydky's *Transmedia Adaptation in the Nineteenth Century* (2020). For Murray, the network building characterizes processes going on around adaptations, while shaping the texts as we know them. She focuses on adaptation industry networks with their specific agents (authors, producers, film directors, book and film reviewers, book fair and film festivals organizers), foregrounding the significance of the participants' statuses, their competitiveness on the market, the level of prestige ascribed to different adaptation-linked events, "bargaining skills of the various book and screen industry figures" (2011, p. 139). While also interested in the industrial dimension of the network metaphor, Lopez Szwydky elaborates on how the professional careers of the 19th-century authors "depended on a network of adaptations for immediate visibility and future posterity" (2020, p. 20). At the same time, Szwydky focuses not only on the industrial side of the adaptation activities but on a more text-oriented aspect, including the endless recyclings of familiar plots and their characteristic features across *media* platforms. Reminding her readers about "distant reading" (Moretti) practices, Szwydky asks them "to extrapolate meaning through an extensive network of texts and allusions" (2020, p. 14), while "following how major texts move across centuries" (2020, p. 18).

Unlike Murray and Szwydky, Newell discusses the mechanisms of network building in the audience's perception of old stories. She understands by a given work's adaptation network "the aggregate of texts responsible for and generated by a given work" (2017, p. 2). Newell is interested in what each adaptation contributes to the development of "a particular work's network: the broad inventory of narrative moments, reference points, and iconography that comes to be associated with a particular work through successive acts of adaptation" (2017, p. 8). This broad inventory is a creative result of the text's rich cultural life when certain elements are repeated (with variations) again and again, until they become the privileged narrative features. Newell points out that audiences – (through adaptations) are taught to recognize what "counts" (2017, p. 9) in a particular work.

Following McFarlane (who follows Roland Barthes), Newell analyzes *The Wizard of Oz* (1939, dir. Victor Fleming, based on L. Frank Baum's 1900 novel *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*) and its constellation[2], observing that certain elements

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[2] Numerous adaptations in film and television (*The Wiz*, 1978; *Return to Oz*, 1985; *Tin Man*, 2007; *Oz the Great and Powerful*, 2013; *Emerald City*, 2017), several print adaptations (Gregory Maguire's 1995

(Barthes' "cardinal functions") should remain in any version of the text for it to be recognized as a version of an old story. For Newell, this obsession with repeating the same elements "is less about necessary condensing than about a practised inspiration of what counts in a work" (2017, p. 10). Practised inspirations are behind many reworkings of popular narratives, behind the network building itself. The idea that inspirations are practiced and trained in the reworking of old stories is very appealing. When the cardinal elements of the originals are preserved, the adapted narratives can digress (as much as they wish), opening-up "multiple possible narrative trajectories" (2017, p. 9).

Adaptations are tools for inspiration boosts and simultaneously energy savers: they let creators stay engaged with favourite plots while offering the Lego pieces of these plots (so to speak) to assemble and rearrange. Accordingly, the work (a film, an illustration) signals itself as a node in a particular network by visual aesthetics – but with a twist, Newell voices. Through repetition in many texts from a given network, an element is recognized as essential, though it does not have to be repeated in its entirety – just a hint is enough for the viewers. The iconography of adaptation is not fixed, and the audiences are ready to accept substitutions, swaps, replacements, and displacements. The audiences start looking for such elements within a particular text. The knowing adaptation audiences are experienced players, who can predict what to look at, and how to enjoy the same once again though differently. Newell puts it, "an audience is not satisfied by experiencing a work in only one iteration and *medium*" (2017, p. 15 – 16).

The metaphor of a network accentuates not only how much is remembered but also how culturally productive certain nodes in the network are, how effectively information flows along certain network channels, and how far the viewers are able to travel starting from a familiar narrative.

In this essay, the co-existence of a familiar literary narrative and a sometimes totally unfamiliar cultural or historical context, to which the narrative is transposed, is of utmost importance. The unfamiliarity and unpredictability of context in an adaptation might be conceptualized through the notion of "prosthetic memory." According to Alison Landsberg (2004),

> *prosthetic memory* emerges at the interface of a person and a historical narrative of the past, at an experiential site, such as a movie theatre or a

novel *Wicked: The Life and Times of the Wicked Witch of the West*), several video and board games, stage versions, and an amusement park.

museum. In this moment of contact, an experience occurs through which the person sutures himself or herself into a larger history… In the process, the person does not simply apprehend a historical narrative but takes on a more personal, deeply felt memory of a past event through which he or she did not live. The resulting prosthetic memory has the ability to shape the person's subjectivity and politics (2004, p. 2).

Landsberg studies the effects that mass cultural representation of historic events (like slavery and the Holocaust) has on memory, making it possible for the audience to come into contact (sensuous, affective, and bodily) with experiences which they / we did not live through. Other people's memories – through mediation – become our "own" prosthetic memories, our cultural "artificial limbs" (2004, p. 20). Landsberg is intrigued by the potential of such memories to produce empathy, social and cultural responsibility, and to transform or foster political views.

Adaptations are viewed, in this essay, as texts that engage the network regime of memory and, via networks, enrich the audience's knowledge of unpredictable cultural and historical contexts, through the appropriation of classic texts.

Romeos, Juliets, and Beyond

Films revisit different verbal and audiovisual texts in their recycling of *The Most Excellent and Lamentable Tragedy of Romeo and Juliet* (1597), not always making Shakespeare's work a starting point for themselves. Being an adaptation (like many Shakespearean plays) of a story that had appeared in a number of Italian and French novellas (Matteo Bandello, Luigi da Porto), making particular use of Arthur Brooke's narrative poem *The Tragicall Historye of Romeus and Juliet* (1562), a translation of Pierre Boaistuau's version, the tragedy acquired a new life on the 20th century screen. Most popular and well-known cinematic readings – the most influential nodes in this network – are viewed as such because they proved to be highly productive in the cultural industry giving rise to several traditions of films adapting *Romeo and Juliet*.

For instance, we can view a relatively small "aggregate" of films by Italian directors Renato Castellani (1954), Franco Zeffirelli (1968), and Carlo Carlei (2013) – which set the action in real Verona, unlike the in-studio Verona of George Cukor (1936) – as an example of Italian re-appropriations of a Britlit masterpiece. Castellani's film attempts to trigger the viewer's memory of Luigi da Porto's and

even Masuccio Salernitano's novellas (potentially changing the dynamics of the original and the derivative texts). In this essay, the focus is on another "aggregate", an influential line of a *West-Side Story* kind: a radical change of context with the emphasis on complex social conflicts in the background of a love story: either opposition between youth gangs, like in Abel Ferrara's *China Girl* (1987) or competing business empires, like in Baz Luhrman's *Romeo + Juliet* (1996). To make it more complex and political, *The Lovers of Verona* (*Les Amants de Vérone*, 1949) by André Cayatte transports the viewers to post-war Italy, making Juliet (Georgia) a daughter of a fascist magistrate. Jiri Weiss's *Romeo, Juliet and Darkness* (*Romeo, Julie a tma*, 1960) transforms the girl into a young Jewish woman to be hidden from Gestapo in 1942 by a Prague student (her Romeo). Peter Ustinov's *Romanoff and Juliet* (1961) reminds the audience of the Cold War contexts; a hip-hop musical film *Rome and Jewel* (2006, dir. Charles T. Kanganis), set in Los Angeles, – of conflicts based on race and class, and the screen life movie *R#J* (2021, dir. Carey Williams) emphasizes different ways to use social *media*.

When Harold Bloom writes about this tragedy in his book *Shakespeare: The Invention of the Human* (1998), he twice uses the word "remember", in the following contexts: "When I think of the play (…), I first remember neither the tragic outcome nor the gloriously vivid Mercutio and the Nurse. My mind goes directly to the vital center, Act II, Scene ii, with its incandescent exchange between the lovers…" (1998, p. 90); "Perhaps any playgoer or any reader remembers best Romeo and Juliet's aubade after their single night of fulfillment" (1998, p. 101). Though we do not know what any playgoer or any reader remembers, it goes without saying that this tragedy is so deeply associated, in the cultural memory, with "persuasive celebration of romantic love" (1998, p. 90), that almost any story of the tragic obstacles to young love triggers unavoidable comparisons. But, as Tony Howard pointed out in his article "Shakespeare's Cinematic Offshoots" (2007), we inherit from this play not only our images of romance and generational discord – but also images of "social hatred[3]".

When appropriating the tragedy, the international screen successfully repurposes it to produce our memories of diverse social contexts and look into different types, varieties, variations and degrees of violence and social hatred

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[3] Howard's chapter mentions the following adaptations: *Romeo and Juliet in the Village* (*Romeo und Julia auf dem Dorfe*, 1941; dir. Valerien Schmidely, Hans Trommer), *The Lovers of Verona, Romanoff and Juliet, Romeo, Juliet and Darkness, Romeo and Juliet of Today* (*Kuko su se voleli Rome I Julija*, 1966, dir. Jovan Zivanovic), *West Side Story* (1961, dir. Jerome Robbins, Robert Wise), *Panic Button* (1964, dir. George Sherman, Giuliano Carnimeo), *The Punk* (1993, dir. Michael Sarne; based on the novel by Gideon Sams), *Tromeo and Juliet* (1996, dir. Lloyd Kaufman).

triggered by these contexts. Family feud is repurposed to create flows of information to remind us of political and social instability, ethnical and racial confrontations, war memories, corporate wars, and even wars between porn tzars (*Tromeo and Juliet*). Adaptation is about the change of context, but we would like to emphasize that unpredictably, this story turned out to be very productive on the screen of violence, placing in the background the romantic part of the narrative, significantly shifting our cultural attention. The network, taking us away from the memory of the literary originals, works in the area of prosthetic historical memory.

Focusing on four films (from the 1940s, the 1960s, and the 1980s), which undoubtfully belong to the tragedy's network, and one series (2021—22), which does not, I will show how different versions take us on different tours of the new contexts with their historical and cultural specificity – visualized. Selecting three cardinal episodes (the first encounter at a dance party at the Capulets, the balcony scene, and the death scene from the tragedy's final act), I will demonstrate in what way these visualizations both tap into our memories of the original, and shift our expectations, and enrich the network with more images and issues.

André Cayatte's film *The Lovers of Verona* starts with a Prologue (not unlike the tragedy itself). However, in this case, the Prologue shifts the viewer's attention from the family feud to the production of glass in Murano: where we learn about the tradition dating back to the 15th century, the dangers of the production process, and the reasons the glassblowers were located in Murano. Most importantly, we are made to switch from Shakespearean locations to the landscape of post-war Italy, facing its recent past, and staying in touch with its traditional arts and crafts. Loosely based on the tragedy, the film is part of the network: the filming of *Romeo and Juliet* is embedded in the contemporary narrative of two star-crossed lovers. The filming takes place partly in Venice and partly in Verona, which "lies in ruins" ("dans les ruines"), as the producer says. The producer turns to an ex-magistrate (who leaves in seclusion because of his fascist past) to ask for a "Renaissance bed" ("un lit Renaissance") for the film set. The mixture of events reveals to viewers (many of whom nowadays have no personal knowledge of war) what post-war experiences might be like. In this case, life has stopped for some characters (the ex-magistrate and his household), while life goes on for the young and the ambitious filming crew. The past is interwoven with the present, and there is no definitive answer as to how past experiences might be integrated into the present, and whether or not the present is able to deal with the past. When the film producer says that he is not to blame that Verona lies in ruins, ex-magistrate Maglia (Louis

Salou) asks: "Is Shakespeare to blame?[4]" (0h19'02'') Although the producer answers in the negative, the question points out how significant and painful the issue of collective blame is for this historic space, and how lost one feels in a post-war context.

The Lovers of Verona condenses the first encounter with the balcony scene. In this version, Angelo (Serge Reggiani) and Georgia (Anouk Aimée) first meet while working as stunts for two film stars and taking part in filming the balcony scene long-distance shot. The episode is particularly compelling because after having climbed up to the balcony, Angelo is totally unprepared to see a stunning young beauty (he thought he would see the star Bettina Verdi, for whose sake he agreed to take part in the filming). The lovers' death is also staged on set and involves two dominant motifs of this narrative – the post-fascist deformation of the society and the significance of traditional arts in Italy in any epoch. Angelo, shot by Georgia's mentally unstable and war-traumatized uncle Amedeo (Marcel Dalio), reaches the film studio to say farewell to "Juliet." Crying on his dead body, Georgia picks up broken glass and cuts her veins. Glass (both fragile *and* dangerous) frames the story of post-war misery, taking the viewers inside the homes and souls of ex-fascists and their children with their desperate (though theatricalized) personal situations.

In *Romeo, Juliet and Darkness*, a 1960 Czech drama film by Jirí Weiss, inspired by Shakespeare and based on Jan Otčenášek's novella, our expectations are guided by the presence of two names in the title. Hence the search for the two key scenes seems appropriate: the first encounter of Czech Romeo and Juliet occurs not at the dances but in a flat just left by the Jewish family with two children, who obey the orders to arrive at the station in the morning (to be taken to the concentration camp, as the viewer supposes). Hanna (Daniela Smutná), a Juliet with the Star of David on her coat, disobeys and is hidden in the attic by a high school student Pavel (Ivan Mistrík). The house they live in has long balconies looking into the inner yard (Hanna thinks of avoiding a run-in with a military man by climbing down one of them, but Pavel stops her). Hanna's position upstairs makes Pavel reenact the balcony scene over and over again each time he climbs the stairs. Hanna's death occurs, so to say, off-stage as she runs out of the house into the street full of military men who are hunting illegally hidden city residents. *Romeo, Juliet and Darkness* provides the audience with insights into many different kinds

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[4] "Est-ce ma faute, si Vérone est en ruines?" – "Et la guerre, celle de Shakespeare?" *The Lovers of Verona*, Germany, France, United Kingdom, 1949; dir. André Cayatte, dialogue Jacques Prévert (my translation).

of "darkness" permeating life in the context of war. The older generation and their fears inspire Hanna to make her spontaneous and ultimately fatal decision. The conflicts from outside the old tragedy seem no less tragic including the collaboration with the enemy, the distrust, and mutual suspicions. In this way, the 1960s film looks back on the war conflicts and the impossible love story, providing the audience with prosthetic memories to raise issues and encourage empathy.

The following two takes on the classic narrative, delve more into the constructed and imagined aspects of the represented eras. Peter Ustinov's *Romanoff and Juliet* (1961), set in imaginary Concordia, stages the first encounter between Romanoff (John Gavin), the son of a Soviet ambassador, and Juliet (Sandra Dee), the daughter of an American ambassador, during a diplomatic reception held by the President of the Concordian Republic (Peter Ustinov). Wittily reworking lots of clichés of the Cold War era (the wiretapping, America and Russia spying on one another, Soviet women reading *Statistics of Manganese Production in Eastern Siberia: Complete and Unabridged* in their spare time), the film parodically plays with the viewer's poetic expectations of the encounter scene through dialogues:

> Romanoff: […] People think a sky is blue. Sky is often green, orange, black, and purple. You are like that!
> Juliet: Purple?
> Romanoff: Surprising! (0h28'25")

The balcony scene does not have Juliet in it but only Romanoff thinking the two of them have no chance, and about to shoot himself. The President of Concordia, his soldiers, and the Soviet spy gather under the balcony to persuade Romanoff not to kill himself. The Spy succeeds when he starts quoting Romanoff and Juliet's intimate love exchange, which he overheard: "I listened in a shadow and took your words down in shorthand" (1h27'15"). The comic representation of the Cold War love affair interweaves such idiosyncrasies into the most iconic episodes of the classic narrative. The aspects of this context shift the episode's structure, its dominant motifs, and overtones. The era's paranoia gets a comic treatment in Ustinov's film while prompting the audience to have an idea of fears and doubts seemingly irrelevant to the original text – to learn prosthetically what those in love might have been worried about at the time of political tensions.

The dance scene in *Romanoff and Juliet* is moved towards the end of the narrative, winding up the story with an atmosphere of reconciliation and harmony. The President of Concordia (not unlike the Prince in the tragedy or an

experienced puppeteer) sums up the events, which, this time, get a happy ending, and leaves his characters in the country with an evidently symbolic name – Concordia. His control over the narrative world in the closing scenes filters the whole story for us through the President's perspective—ironic and unwilling to take sides.

Abel Ferrara's *China Girl* (1987) stages all three scenes in 1980s Manhattan. Tony (the name of *West Side Story* Romeo) from Little Italy and Tye (Sari Chang) from Chinatown reenact the old tragedy against the background of imaginary[5] Italian versus Chinese youth gangs' fights (another allusion to the Jets and the Sharks of *West Side Story*). This imaginary, dreamlike atmosphere of the plot is created by the opening episode, in which Tony's (Richard Panebianco) elder brother Alby (James Russo) is watching a remake of D'Onofrio bakery into a new Chinese shop Canton Garden. The remake is happening right across the street from his family Pizzeria, and the whole film begins not unlike Alby's fantasy of what events might have taken place if the competition in the neighbouring communities transformed into the battles of the rival gangs.

Oneiric quality of the dance scene imagery (1987 night-disco) is built upon stylized camera angles and the dark colour palette of leather and denim. Pensive "Romeo[6]" and enigmatic Tye meet in the disco fog where their first dance ends with an abrupt theatricalized divide of the dancing crowd – into our own and others. The haze of the party clears, and the conflicts reveal themselves. The film's energy centres around "this ain't China" (said by Tye's friend), nor Italy, we can add, hence the young insist on loving whom they want. Unfortunately, this is another cinematic take on the old tragedy, and such insistences are fatal. The balcony scene (in the rain) is a short episode for the protagonists to arrange a date that will transfer them – via a series of encounters – straight to their death. In the closing episode, the young couple, finally left alone by both gangs, are walking through Chinatown, spotted by Tsu Shin (Joey Chin), the most unpredictable and violent gang member, and killed with two shots. The closing *mise-en-scène* with a high-angle framing of two bodies on the pavement still holding hands, is yet another visual addition to the network – one of the unforgettable endings to the story of star-crossed lovers. The viewers' feeling that they are taken not to the actual second half of the 1980s but to the dreamworld of the decade is supported

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[5] By the year the film was released, cinematic imagination has revisited Chinatown many times – from *Broken Blossoms or The Yellow Man and the Girl* (1919, dir. D.W. Griffith) to Roman Polanski's *Chinatown* (1974) and Michael Cimino's *Year of the Dragon* (1985).

[6] Tony is given the nickname by a guy from the gang, Mercury. He later comes up with another nick for Tony – "Gandhi".

by the film's soundtrack with several disco melodies and the sonic leitmotif – Paul Hipp's *Midnight for You.*

The most recent journey the author of this essay has taken via the *Romeo and Juliet* adaptation network was organized by the South Korean series *Snowdrop* (설강화, 2021—22, dir. Jo Hyun-tak) representing a story of a romantic relationship between a South-Korean English Literature Department student Eun Yeong-ro (portrayed by a K-pop star Jisoo) and a North-Korean agent Lim Soo-ho (Jung Hae-in). Set in 1987 Seoul against the background of the June 1987 Democracy Movement, the series (with a violent hostage plot) establishes its play with the viewer's memory of the classic narrative in Episode 1. Without saying that any story of star-crossed lovers reminds us of the Shakespearean narrative, we would like to prove that the play with the ur-narrative in the series is consistent and enriching for the network. The action of Episode 1 takes place at the dorm of Hosu Women's University, where the more privileged students interact with a much less privileged telephone girl, Bun-ok. In exchange for her favours (an extra phone call, an unrevealed late arrival), Bun-ok asks for favours in return.

> Bun-ok: If you're that sorry, would you do me a favour?
> Eun Yeong-ro: What is it? Just name it. I'll do anything.
> Bun-ok: Get me the English edition of *Romeo and Juliet.*
> Eun Yeong-ro: English edition?
> Bun-ok: What? Is that so surprising? Because I want an English edition when I'm not even a college student?
> Eun Yeong-ro: No. That's not what I was thinking. Even English literature majors don't read them much. You know how it is. They're not even that good at English. I'll give you a copy tomorrow. I recently bought one[7] (0h43'37''—0h44'20'').

The old tragedy gets involved in discussions of power relationships, the access to knowledge and via knowledge – to better future lives. It is not surprising that when Bun-ok finally gets the book, she is shown not reading it but secretly parading with it along the empty dorm corridors late in the evenings while having put on the best posh clothes she has stolen from some of the wealthier students. *Romeo and Juliet* becomes an addition to her status symbols along with the right shoes and skirts.

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[7] I am here quoting the subtitles from the version streamed via bilibili.tv

Unlike Bun-ok, Eun Yeong-ro stars in the tragedy-like plot: she and Lim Soo-ho are the children of the ruling elite representatives in two Koreas. They cannot and should not be together. The series and the tragedy are mutually enriching. Korean Romeo climbs into the dorm through the window and is hidden in the attic of the university, Juliet has got a brother who dies not without Lim Soo-ho's involvement, and the parents are devastated and afraid to lose the daughter after the son. But this lens is only one of a dozen others, and the series takes the viewer far from home, representing the fictional details of the 1987 political upheaval. The series' history distortion has been one of the most frequently discussed topics in the film reviews (with mentions of an online petition "calling for the drama to be banned[8]"), raising issues of the balance between the fictional and the factual and the audience's response to it. The difficulty of distinguishing between the imagined and the "real" is part of the prosthetic memory work, and adaptations remix both – the literary facts and historic truths.

Conclusion

In *Convergence Culture* (2006) Henry Jenkins writes of "media audiences who will go almost anywhere in search of the kinds of entertainment experiences they want" (p. 2 – 3). Though he mentions this in connection to the migratory behaviour of audiences who search for their favourite content across multiple media platforms, the idea of a search or a drift in search of entertainment is most important. Adaptations trap the viewers with promises of familiarity and then make their imaginations work – to adapt to the unknown and unfamiliar.

Film adaptations perform a significant cultural function, offering the viewers prosthetic memories of unknown contexts. They shift the audience's attention from literary fiction to the cinematic "realities." These realities raise serious issues, which the audiences should not ignore, believing that an adaptation is just another way to take a memory journey back to, for instance, Shakespeare (in his many guises). In *Romeo and Juliet* adaptations analyzed above, I looked at the mechanisms of the attention shift, the ways viewers have to deal with complicated war and post-war realities and topics of collective and individual responsibilities while enjoying a new take on the classic tragedy. An adaptation is an invitation on an unpredictable memory trip into a social context, which we know little about but feel necessary to revisit.

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[8] Dong, Sun-hwa, "Premature to Accuse JTBC drama *Snowdrop* of 'distorting history': experts", *The Korea Times,* 12.09.2021, https://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/art/2021/12/688_320282.html (last visited June 2022).

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