Adaptation Studies in Europe

Colleen Kennedy-Karpat

Bilkent University, Faculty of Art, Design and Architecture, Ankara, TURKEY
Department of Communication and Design

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Abstract

Adaptation is a creative process that crosses and blurs boundaries: from page to stage, from small screen to big screen – and then, sometimes, back again. Beyond questions of form and medium, many adaptations also cross national borders and language barriers, making them important tools for intercultural communication and identity formation. This paper calls for a more intensive, transnational study of adaptation across print, stage, and screens in EU member and affiliate countries. For the highest possible effectiveness, interdisciplinarity is key; as a cultural phenomenon, adaptation benefits from perspectives rooted in a variety of fields and research methods. Its influence over transnational media flows, with patterns in production and reception across European culture industries, offers scholars a better understanding of how narratives are transformed into cultural exports and how these exchanges affect transnational relationships. The following questions are proposed to shape this avenue for research: (1) How do adaptations track narrative and media flows within and across national, linguistic, and regional boundaries? (2) To what extent do adapted narratives reflect transnational relationships, and how might they help construct Europeanness? (3) How do audiences in the EU respond to transnational adaptation, and how are European adaptations circulated and received outside Europe? (4) What impact does adaptation have in the culture industries, and what industrial practices might facilitate adaptation across media platforms and/or national boundaries? The future of adaptation studies and of adaptation as a cultural practice in Europe depends on the development of innovative, comparative, and interdisciplinary approaches to adaptation. The outcomes of future research can hold significant value for European media industries seeking to expand their market reach, as well as for scholars of adaptation, theater, literature, translation, and screen media.

Keywords: adaptation, European Union, media industries, cultural studies.

This paper proposes new directions for adaptation studies based on contemporary cultural and media industries in EU member and affiliate states. Considering the corpus-based methodology proposed by Cattrysse (2014) in Descriptive Adaptation Studies, this model advances data-driven methods that would build an informed, empirically significant platform that can serve as a foundation for the kind of qualitative analyses that have defined the bulk of academic adaptation studies. Such research would also help estimate the financial impact of adaptation in media industries, touching on both production and reception contexts across the European Union and affiliate countries. The goal of such transnational, cross-platform research is to explore how narratives transcend linguistic, cultural, and formal boundaries in contemporary European culture, and how these multiple crossings foster both national and European identities.

© Authors. Terms and conditions of Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International (CC BY 4.0) apply. Correspondence: Colleen Kennedy-Karpat (PhD), Bilkent University, Faculty of Art, Design and Architecture, Department of Communication and Design (FADA-COMD), Çankaya, 06800 Ankara, TURKEY. E-mail: kenkar@bilkent.edu.tr.
The notion of textuality can serve as a defining prerequisite for determining what is and is not an adaptation: both source and adaptation must have clearly documented, possibly shared or collective authorship; each text’s creative genesis must develop over a discrete, though possibly prolonged period of time; and this process must culminate in clear date(s) of public release as a complete text.

For a trans-European study rooted in content analysis, the necessary data for each adaptation and its source text(s) falls under three primary headings: economic-industrial, national-cultural, and narrative content.

A key question is the extent to which an adaptation’s national or transnational bona fides are invoked in assessing its public impact and general reception.

Academic adaptation studies would do well to consider adaptation from an industrial angle.

1. Locating adaptation

By definition, the creativity of adaptation is defined by crossing boundaries: from one medium to another, from one socio-historic moment to another, from one genre to another, and so on. Beyond questions of form and time, many adaptations also cross national boundaries, targeting different populations, and frequently crossing language barriers as well. Sharing narratives across these boundaries through adaptation can create and/or strengthen a sense of community; conversely, the differences made visible by adaptation can also highlight areas of cultural specificity.

There is no existing, reliable estimate of how many adaptations are produced annually by any given national culture industry. Considering the current number of EU member states (28) plus additional countries connected to the EU by candidacy, treaty or other agreement, the raw number should reach into the thousands just considering releases since the year 2000. Furthermore, the term “culture industry” suggests a broad category, one whose baseline alone encompasses print publication, theater, film, and television.

One, or perhaps the major deterrent to producing a workable number of adaptations is the mutable definition of adaptation; what “counts” can vary considerably. It is certainly a subcategory of intertextuality as Genette (1982) defines the term, but there is no firm line separating adaptation from other kinds of intertexts. This problem of categories and terminology stems in large part from the interdisciplinary nature of adaptation, and the differing agendas imposed by literary studies, theater studies, screen studies, and translation studies. Terms that make sense in one field as proximate, if not equivalent to adaptation (e.g., revival in theater; remake in screen studies) often have limited relevance in other contexts, and methodologies that are well-established in one area may not be applied so readily to others. Studying multiple forms in the context of adaptation studies therefore demands an interdisciplinary approach, one that recognizes a degree of medium specificity while seeking common patterns across distinct creative forms (Hutcheon, 2006).

In academia, the grounding of adaptation as an offshoot of literary studies means that scholars of adaptation have been primed to prioritize literature, especially prose fiction, over the cultural forms that have adapted it (Leitch, 2003). Meanwhile, media studies have increasingly dealt with various forms of intertextuality—such as the reboot and the spinoff, for example—while not necessarily considering them as or alongside adaptations (Klein & Palmer, 2016). The field of translation studies has also been brought into productive dialogue with adaptation, particularly in terms of scholarly methodology (e.g., Cattrysse 2014; Raw, 2013). Yet the scholarly focus of translation studies vis-à-vis adaptation—exploring their shared and distinct qualities as both creative processes and cultural products—has touched only rarely on other fields. Exceptionally, Krebs (2014) links translation with adaptation through case studies culled from both theater and
cinema; Grossman (2015) advances her notion of “elasTEXTity” using examples from stage and screen; however, such cross-medium attention is rare.

It is therefore crucial to establish a definition of adaptation that can cover interdisciplinary territories while still delimiting a workable corpus. Following Leitch’s (2007) observation that the process of adaptation requires at least one text to stand as its source, the notion of textuality can serve as a defining prerequisite. Importantly, the form of the source text(s) here is far less significant than the conditions of its production: it must have clearly documented, possibly shared or collective authorship; its creative genesis must develop over a discrete, though possibly prolonged period of time; and this process must culminate in clear date(s) of public release as a complete text. The same criteria should apply to the adapted text. This definition of textuality would disqualify, for example, historical narratives, which some scholars have treated as adaptations solely by virtue of their basis on historical fact (e.g. Tutan & Raw, 2013); and narratives “based on a true story” without a single text or author of origin credited or widely identified in the new text (Leitch, 2007). While what Constandinides (2012) calls para-adaptations—that is, fan works and other amateur transformations of popular culture—may readily fit the above criteria establishing their textuality, in the interest of maintaining a manageable scope, this project will not include them.

Furthermore, source texts that meet this definition of textuality must be credited either by the creators or by a broad critical consensus for a text to be considered as “adapted.” Following Grant (2002), while there is no such thing as a crypto-adaptation, not every adaptation presents itself overtly as such, nor does it necessarily credit its source. In cases where there is no official acknowledgment of adaptation or inspiration, critical consensus could be established through, for example: published reviews; programming notes for festivals or exhibitions; marketing materials and paratexts (e.g., blurbs, synopses, creator interviews); and/or scholarly criticism (Grant, 2002).

The requirement that a text be complete is subject to conventions of its form. For example, a playwright’s published work could be considered complete in itself, without a single stage performance. A screenwriter could sell a teleplay that never makes it to studio production. But neither of these would demonstrate full achievement of the form as intended for popular consumption. In cases of allographic arts—that is, artistic expression with multiple phases of creative intervention, with performance and/or exhibition as the ideal vehicle for public engagement—completeness must require full market realization, e.g.: plays and musicals performed on stage; television series or miniseries that release a full run of episodes; films that have been released through theatrical and/or streaming distribution. Literary manuscripts, as an autographic or monophasic art form, must be affiliated with a publisher and released in some conventional form (bound book, magazine, e-book, etc.) for public circulation.

2. National and transnational adaptation

Beyond the questions of textuality and completion, both sources and adaptations must face the question of national origin. This, too, does not always produce a straightforward answer, especially for collective productions like film and television. But this national backdrop is important, and can refract to produce a spectrum of transnationality by which some texts will occupy a single national context more comfortably than other, more internationally collaborative texts. This exploration would be usefully driven by data gathered under three main headings:

- Economic-industrial;
- National-cultural;
- Narrative.
On the national-cultural end of the spectrum, adaptation has long been understood to play a role in creating and enforcing discourses of national and ethnic identity, particularly in cases where it dovetails with the literary canon (e.g., Haltof, 2011; Vidal, 2012; Sen, 2017). But transnationality has gained wider attention in media studies, particularly in cinema. Bergfelder (2005) notes that finding a transnational lens through which to study mediated narrative “can be seen to mirror the central debate of the European project […], namely to negotiate and reconcile the desires for cultural specificity and national identity with the larger ideal of a supranational community” (315). Adaptation can be transnational in myriad ways, each of which can complicate national discourses—even, sometimes, while enforcing them.

The rise of transnational media studies has not yet been brought fully to bear on adaptation, particularly where industries are concerned (Murray, 2012). Expressing a common viewpoint in the field, Iordanova (2016) emphasizes how transnationality affects the viewing experience, with audiences cultivating transnational subjectivity through contact with particular texts. She acknowledges that “contemporary cinema’s way of being is transnational—from how it is conceived to how it travels, from how it is made to how it is seen.” But Iordanova’s primary focus is on the viewer, asserting that “if you [as a viewer] anchor yourself supranationally, you see different things” than you would with a purview limited to nationally specific media. While this is certainly not incorrect, there is more to transnationality than how it informs media consumers, and adaptation offers a productive way to join reception studies with media production practices. One must “anchor” adaptation practices in the European Union by exploring how media industries’ interconnections contribute to the transnational sphere that Iordanova (2016) perceives. Yet, conversely, such a study may also reveal how adaptation is used to retreat from transnationality and instead work to reinforce national discourses. It is important to understand both of these trends in their various contexts.

3. Reception and (cross-) cultural value(s)

The third research question deals with the market impact and reception of adapted texts. Like adaptation, media reception and audience studies comprise an area of scholarship that has seen a recent push for heightened awareness of its own interdisciplinary applications, and a concomitant effort to innovate the methods that various disciplines use to approach it (Zeller, Ponte & O’Neill, 2015). One study that anticipates applications for adaptation studies is Hujanen and Kangastpunta’s (2015) examination of contemporary audiences faced with intermediality, that is, the condition of different media platforms situated alongside and in hierarchical relation to one another. While Hujanen and Kangastpunta are concerned with media convergence and the shift to digital television, the notion of intermediality that their work explores can be extended beyond technological advancement and into discourses of prestige and cultural value.

Value, too, is an area of reception study that has recently seen increased activity. In the Literary Lab at Stanford University, J. D. Porter (2018) has developed a quantitative approach to measuring the popularity and prestige of canonical literary prose published in English. While this study offers an innovative approach to a thorny question, Porter’s formula overlooks the impact of adaptation on these measurements. Surely, for example, J. R. R. Tolkien and J. K. Rowling have secured their respective positions along both these axes in part because their stories, already widely read in print, have also been brought to film; but to what extent has, say, Thomas Pynchon gained in either popularity or prestige thanks to Paul Thomas Anderson’s adaptation of Inherent Vice (novel 2009, film 2014)? Elsewhere, I have already underscored how media forms are granted or denied certain kinds of attention and acclaim, considering particularly how adaptation plays into assessments of cultural value (Kennedy-Karpat & Sandberg, 2017). Such questions can be further explored through cross-cultural comparison: Do cultures experience similar shifts in value as narratives move from one form to another? Are narratives that cross
cultures through adaptation valued differently from narratives that stay within their cultural context across forms? The content analysis and detailed coding in data-driven adaptation studies would help identify shared characteristics across media types and across national industries, ultimately visualizing adaptation networks across the EU.

European culture industries are not short on adaptations both transmedial and transnational: from Belgian director Ivo van Hove’s 2018 stage adaptation of Hollywood classic *All About Eve* (dir. Joseph L. Mankiewicz, 1950), to the musical adaptation of Jean-Pierre Jeunet’s film *Amélie* (2001; originally *Le Fabuleux destin d’Amélie Poulain*), a production that may have been short-lived on Broadway—just six weeks in 2017—but has since been staged in Japan, Germany, the United Kingdom, and Finland. Swedish author Stieg Larsson’s bestselling *Millennium* series of novels was first adapted in Sweden for the cinema (2009) and for television (2010); Hollywood then came out with its own adaptation of *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo* (2011). Reception studies focused on these and similar adaptations, along with their respective source texts, would productively expand current approaches to intermediality and systems of cultural value.

4. Industrial best practices

The final research question aims to apply this broad view of adaptation to industrial practice in the EU. Studies of cultural production have had limited impact in adaptation scholarship, which tends to describe what existing adaptations do rather than how they came to exist. Such work is rarely prescriptive, ill-suited to offering new or more marketable ways of adapting material. But recent work has carved significant inroads into the political economies of adaptation. Murray’s (2012) *The Adaptation Industry* unpacks the commercial and creative strategies involved in selecting material from one industry—here, literary fiction—as fodder for adaptations in other media. But Murray’s limiting focus on print culture and her emphasis on the Anglosphere (US-UK-Australia) leaves the transnational angle unexamined. Expanding such a study along both these axes would require looking at multiple industries as points of origin for textual sources—and polyglot Europe lends itself well to establishing itself as the core geographic center of such a study.

Taking a different angle on commercial interests in adaptation practice, Jeannelle (2016) studies a French company, Best Seller to Box Office, whose business is in calculating “adaptability quotients” for texts under consideration as sources for cross-media adaptation. This suggests, first, that Murray’s notion of an adaptation industry should be taken very literally indeed; second, that much more could be done to study and promote adaptation as a vehicle for reaching audiences in Europe and beyond. It is not an empty pipe dream to seek to identify patterns of success in European adaptation, as such a dataset would serve a purpose not unlike the proprietary formula of Best Seller to Box Office. Moreover, such results could be useful not only for media industries, but also for nonprofit or government institutions dedicated to funding cultural production, particularly those with an eye to drawing transnational audiences.

By collecting and analyzing quantifiable data from different kinds of adapted texts along three key axes—economic-industrial, national-cultural, and narrative—adaptation research program could generate new, actionable knowledge about where, how, and for whom adaptation holds appeal across Europe. The implications of these findings could help shape EU media policy and funding practices in both the public and private sector, while also contributing to ongoing scholarly work in the literary, performing, and media arts.
5. Key questions

In order to trace these adaptive dynamics, I propose the following key questions to guide future research in trans-European adaptation studies:

1. How do adaptations track narrative and media flows within and across national, linguistic, and regional boundaries?
2. To what extent do adapted narratives reflect transnational relationships, and how might they help construct Europeanness?
3. How do audiences in the EU respond to transnational adaptation, and how are European adaptations circulated and received outside Europe?
4. What impact does adaptation have in the culture industries, and what industrial practices might facilitate adaptation across media platforms and/or national boundaries?

This section will consider each of the four key research questions by presenting the state of current scholarship along with recommended methodologies to expand on these academic discussions.

5.1 Narrative flows and transnational relationships in Europe

The first two questions are intertwined with one another, both in the existing literature and in the methods proposed to address them. They also establish the parameters for a key dataset in quantitative adaptation studies. The first question develops the what and who of adaptation: What narratives are being adapted? What is their original language? What is their new form, and what was the old? Who (and where) are the audiences receiving this narrative? The answers to these questions present emergent patterns in the data and use them to consider the role(s) of adaptations in constructing and critiquing both national and transnational European cultural identities.

Like translation, whose academic study has recently been brought into productive dialogue with adaptation studies (e.g., Venuti, 2007; Cattrysse, 2014; Krebs, 2014; Raw, 2013), adaptation brings a known or knowable source text into a new context, thereby creating a different but inextricably related text with potential to reach new audiences. Both adaptation and translation are predicated on coexistence, although the nature of this coexistence can differ significantly. Translation generally presumes that a text and its translation will reach distinct populations with limited overlap, while adaptation across media forms often presumes the source and its adaptation to share the same cultural space(s) and, therefore, the same audience(s).

But not every model of adaptation fits this description. Some frameworks, such as cross-cultural screen remakes, can closely resemble translation in that the adapted/remade text aims to attract audiences that are presumed to be unfamiliar with the source. This presumption is not entirely unfounded. While the rise of digital streaming and content-sharing has, to some extent, cracked longstanding barriers to cross-cultural media exposure, Kustritz (2015) asserts that many people relying on industry-sanctioned points of access (e.g. satellite television, subscription streaming services, theatrical distribution, etc.) find their choices limited to, on the one hand, immediately local productions; on the other, mainstream American films and television. Such consumption patterns are further shaped by national preferences for dubbing versus subtitling (Pelletier, 2012). While individual texts, with or without their modifications (dubbing, subtitling, etc.), may cross borders more easily than ever, the tendency for local productions to dominate media markets opens a window for adaptations and remakes to contribute to the transnational media landscape. To emphasize: adaptation is not concerned with how texts are
spreading transnationally; rather, its purpose is to examine the flow of narratives as they generate multiple, intertextually related texts across forms and/or cultures.

Following Jenkins, Ford and Green (2013), narratives can be more spreadable in one form than another—even though, importantly, their focus on digital networks in coining this term leaves out, for example, theatrical performance. This notion of “spreadability” contrasts with a major limitation of current adaptation studies, where scholarship tends to focus on a few or even just one of the various forms involved in cross-media adaptation (e.g., literature, theater, screens, digital media). Such single- or strictly dual-platform studies do not necessarily adhere to a methodology, theory, or research agenda that transcends the selected form(s). The very term “adaptation studies” can carry different connotations across disciplinary divides, even if intertextuality, multimodality, and intermodality are of keen interest to a number of fields (Elleström, 2010). Promoting a shared critical vocabulary would emphasize the common ground to which adaptation studies can lay claim.

Examples of cross-media adaptations that enact this spreadability would include the Royal Shakespeare Company’s staging of Hilary Mantel’s historical novels *Wolf Hall* (2010) and *Bring up the Bodies* (2014); *Wolf Hall* was also adapted for television (Sandberg, 2017). Stephen Daldry’s film *Billy Elliot* (2000) was adapted into a stage musical that debuted in 2008 and played for 11 years in London; additional productions came to the stage in Japan and South Korea (billyelliotthemusical.com). Similarly, Jean-Pierre Jeunet’s film *Amélie* (original French title *Le Fabuleux destin d’Amélie Poulin*, 2001) inspired a musical that was short-lived on Broadway—running only six weeks in spring 2017—but has since seen new productions in Japan, Germany, the United Kingdom, and Finland (Wikipedia). Swedish author Stieg Larsson’s bestselling *Millennium* series was first adapted in Sweden for the cinema (2009) and then for television (2010); Hollywood followed with its own adaptation of *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo* (2011). Such transnational, cross-media reach exemplifies the kind of spreadable narrative that has inspired the questions posed in this project.

5.2 Determining textuality

The question of what counts as an adaptation also must not be taken for granted. Following Leitch (2007), this project will take the notion of textuality as a defining prerequisite both for sources and their adaptations. Importantly, neither the form nor the platform of a text are crucial; a “film” can be screened in a 35mm print or streamed online; likewise, “television” need not be limited to broadcast models. What remains essential no matter its finished form are the conditions of a text’s production: it must have clearly documented, though possibly shared authorship; its creative genesis must occur over a set, though perhaps prolonged period of time; and this process must culminate in clear date(s) of public release as a complete text.

This completeness is subject to conventions of each text’s respective form, and as stated above, only texts which have reached full market realization will be considered complete. This would include, for example: plays and musicals performed on stage; series or miniseries that have released a full season/run of episodes; films that have secured distribution, whether theatrical or streaming. Print manuscripts without a performative component (e.g., short stories, novels, comics/bande dessinée) must be affiliated with a publisher and released in at least one conventional form (hardcover, magazine, ebook, etc.) for public circulation. Whether as sources or adaptations, incomplete texts—for instance, plays that have been written but never staged; screenplays bought by a studio but never produced; manuscripts never published for commercial consumption—may be reasonably excluded from the corpus in order to keep a feasibly limited scope.
Emphasizing textuality is crucial to the core methodology of adaptation studies, as the data collected for coding will revolve around texts. Each component of the definition established above situates both sources and adaptations within their respective place(s) and time(s), which are crucial data points for comparative and transnational study. In practical terms, this definition of textuality would not recognize historical narratives, “true stories,” and traditional legends as sources for adaptation, although scholars have usefully understood all of these as such (e.g., respectively, Tutan & Raw, 2013; Leitch, 2007; Thornley, 2018; Krasilovsky, 2018). Such “sourceless” adaptations, as they could be categorized, may still be accounted for in the broadest possible census of adapted texts. However, the lack of precise origins for these narratives means they cannot be subjected to a full content analysis alongside text-to-text adaptations; for reception study, in particular, the textual criteria outlined above must be rigorously applied to both source and adapted texts.

The type of content analysis that I am advocating here has been inspired by Cattrysse (2014), whose work in adaptation studies intersects with his work in translation. Outlining an approach he calls Descriptive Adaptation Studies (hereafter DAS), Cattrysse advocates for research based on quantifiable, empirical data about adapted texts. Drawing on methods developed in the field of translation studies—an affinity between fields that is also explored in Venuti (2007), Raw (2013), and Krebs (2014)—DAS requires an expansive but carefully defined corpus of adapted texts that aims to discern trends that a more limited scope, or a single text, could not capture alone. By using data to establish a broader outlook on cultural production, Cattrysse argues, adaptation scholars could make more effective choices for the close readings and case studies that remain crucial to the field.

Beyond basic textual identifiers and indicators—such as date(s) of release and key creative personnel (e.g., author[s], director[s], performer[s], production company[ -ies])—for a trans-European study, the data for each adaptation and its source text(s) could be collected under three primary headings: economic-industrial, national-cultural, and narrative (Table 1).

Table 1. Data categories for quantitative adaptation study

| Economic-industrial | National-cultural | Narrative |
|---------------------|-------------------|-----------|
| Ratio of expenditures: intake | Nationality/-ies of key creators | Form (print, stage, screen) |
| Copyright transfers | Place(s) of publication / performance / release | Time period(s) represented |
| Awards | Original language(s) | Genre(s) |
| Consumer demographics | Translation(s) | Plot keywords |
| Creative personnel salaries | Reviews in major publications | Character demographics (nationality, race/ethnicity, age, gender, class, etc.) |
| Sources & amount of production funding | | |

Considering (Table 1), it should be immediately clear that not every data point can be applied across all forms. This relates to medium specificity, a term already familiar to adaptation scholars in the context of adaptive aesthetics (Hutcheon, 2006). However, in the quantitative project proposed here, the question of medium holds far greater import for its implications when collecting economic and industrial data. Some of these calculations will be more straightforward than others. While the film industry makes a great deal of useful, regularly collected data freely available (via, for example, the European Audiovisual Observatory), other creative industries are neither as centralized nor as forthcoming with relevant statistics. Indeed, one possible setback for a project like this one may be that certain numbers are simply unavailable or unverifiable; audience numbers for streaming services like Netflix, for example, are notoriously kept secret,
Unlike the generally public release of TV ratings and box office reports in cinema. However, regardless of researchers’ access to or general accuracy of viewership numbers, the core question of transnationality remains in play. The data points most likely to turn up missing or incomplete should not impede progress towards the goal of mapping adaptations across the EU.

The national-cultural category listed above emphasizes the transnational component of this approach. National media and area studies have drawn on adaptations from several different angles, but the common practice of adapting a (national) literary canon to screens large and small has been particularly well studied (e.g., Vanoye, 2005; Haltof, 2011; Vidal, 2012; Sen, 2017). Transnational adaptations are also a prominent point of interest, and I have previously published work in this area (Kennedy-Karpat, 2015). Generally, though, beyond text-specific case studies, collected volumes tend to be organized around limited axes of international exchange and/or on a single media form. Durham (1998) and Mazdon (2000) both focus on French films and their US remakes; Smith and Verevis (2017) focus on film in their study of transnational remakes, though without a specific geographic focus. Hills, Hilmes and Pearson (2019) devote their volume to US-UK connections in television; meanwhile, McCabe and Akass (2012) trace the trajectory of a single TV show, Ugly Betty, through its many transnational incarnations. The ongoing “Lost in Translation?” research project at Ghent University’s Centre for Cinema and Media Studies—under the direction of Gertjan Willems, Eduard Cuelenaere and Stijn Joyes—is devoted to a contemporary cycle of Dutch-Flemish film remakes.

These projects are valuable in themselves, of course, but to echo Cattrysse (2014) once again, the implications of such findings for wider contexts are presumed or extrapolated rather than supported with empirical contextualization. Do the particular cases represented in these studies matter more (and to whom?) than other examples of adaptation? Can case studies transcend the particular details of their limited corpus? Is there a way to measure and study the full context of adaptations as context, and thereby expand the limited purview of discrete and perhaps too arbitrarily chosen case studies? These are the questions that drive the academic side of quantitative adaptation studies.

5.3 Reception contexts

Once the overarching parameters and patterns of contemporary European adaptation have been mapped out, the third key question reintroduces qualitative methods to bring focus to the adapted texts themselves. The core texts for the reception study should represent broader trends; it is impossible to predict how many lines of inquiry might be opened this way, but the aim is to find examples of transnational and national adaptation that demonstrate the patterns revealed through content analysis. Additionally, the intention is to locate examples that, for whatever reason, might not have presented themselves as ideal for a case study without the data to support that choice.

Addressing the question of cultural impact will require some qualitative reception study alongside the content analysis. To start with, cultural response can be measured quantitatively in several ways, by tallying, for example: tickets/copies sold; screens/stages involved; available translations; industry awards. The quantitative approach to popularity and prestige developed at the Stanford Literary Lab shows how such numbers can produce legible data (Porter, 2018). But numbers alone cannot conceptualize a holistic cultural response, especially when the question involves the combination of adaptation and prestige (Kennedy-Karpat & Sandberg, 2017). Looking past the numbers becomes even more urgent when those adaptations are transnational, as these boundary-crossing trajectories raise further questions about how such texts might cultivate or critique a sense of Europeanness.
The qualitative reception study—which, once again, should center those texts that best represent the dataset—will focus on this question of transnational identity. This research question builds on my previous work connecting adaptation with prestige (Kennedy-Karpat & Sandberg, 2017) by examining the specific impact of transnationality on perceptions of value. To what extent is an adaptation’s transnationality—or, alternatively, its national specificity—involv ed in judging its success (or lack thereof)? Under what (or whose) conditions is an adaptation’s transnationality seen as an asset, and when might it be seen as a liability?

In cases where contemporary source text(s) are adapted, reception studies should extend to sources as well, seeking clues or cues that signal its “adaptability.” This raises a question that overlaps with the final research question: to what extent, if any, can critics and/or audiences presage future adaptive success?

5.4 Industrial benefits

Because culture industries stand to gain from the answers to these questions, academic adaptation studies would do well to consider adaptation more frankly from an industrial angle. Much is at stake in assessing how narratives and media forms cross cultural boundaries, and these stakes are limited neither to academia, nor to the private sector. The stakes here involve stories, which are the fabric of culture and how cultures make sense of themselves; and, as Klein (2019) observes, the stories that bear repeating—through adaptation, remaking, restaging, or simply retelling—are those that wield exceptional social power. Sharing narratives across cultural boundaries therefore suggests, at its best, a correlation with intercultural understanding and cooperation. Conversely, cultural imperialism often involves appropriating narratives from and/or imposing narratives on people who are situated outside the hegemony. As with all intercultural communication, sharing stories is an endeavor that must be undertaken responsibly.

Whether an adaptation is viewed positively or negatively, the power of stories is clear to creators and consumers operating in an increasingly globalized marketplace. As a screenwriter and a scholar, Krasilovsky (2018) advocates for greater transcultural openness, but she targets individual writers rather than framing change as an industry-wide concern. This position runs parallel to Iordanova’s (2016) appeal to viewers and scholars who might embrace a transnational perspective—a worthy goal, but one that does not sufficiently address the industrial backdrop against which such individual decisions are made.

Some scholars have begun to recognize these shortcomings in the field of adaptation studies, though only a few have centered the culture industries in their work. Jeannelle (2016) studies one company in France that purports to determine the “adaptability quotient” of texts that have been identified as potential sources for cross-media adaptations. Broadening this spectrum, in The Adaptation Industry, Murray (2012) argues that adaptation offers a useful window through which to view the creative industries as an object of study. While Murray’s work has been widely praised and frequently cited, to my knowledge no major follow-up has interrogated cultural spaces beyond the English-language literary publishing world that forms the locus of Murray’s “materialization” of adaptation studies. Furthermore, Murray’s work replicates a recognized flaw in adaptation studies by figuring a one-way trajectory between print sources and screen adaptations, glossing over screen-to-stage adaptations as well as the long, under-examined history of screen-to-print novelizations (Baetens & Lits, 2004; Van Parys, 2009). European adaptation studies must seek to fill this gap in industrial study, first by joining print with stage and screens to consider them all valid as source and/or target forms; second, by making a comparative study across national, regional, and international markets.
6. Conclusion

The results of data-driven adaptation studies will generate actionable blueprints for future transnational adaptations across the EU. A richer, crosscutting view of the conditions and measures of success for adaptations would allow creators and producers to sidestep the pitfalls of past attempts and more effectively shape their expectations. A comprehensive and comparative content analysis—one that assembles data across economic-industrial, national-cultural, and narrative axes—would reveal both broad patterns and the inevitable nuances hiding within them. Such models may (or may not) already pass as common knowledge, but the outliers that defy these models might well serve as prototypes that shift the paradigm of future transnational adaptations and bring the European project to life through shared narratives.

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