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The American Filmmaking Manipulation of a Translated Novel: David Fincher's adaptation of *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo*

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Abstract

Returning to the notion of the 'cinematic fact' and the 'filmic fact' adopted from the work of Gilbert Cohen-Seat (1946) by Christian Metz (1974), David Fincher's 2011 film adaptation *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo* can be viewed as a manipulation of Stieg Larsson's source Swedish novel. Metz recommended the 'cinematic fact' as the 'vast phenomena' that intervenes before and after the film production, distinguishing it from the 'filmic fact' that represents the textual content of the film, meaning that aspects of the cinematic object can be excluded from the domain of semiotic analysis. By reviewing behind the scenes footage on the production of *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo* (2011), and Fincher's own director's commentary as 'cinematic fact' it can be said that Fincher's style within the American filmmaking machine is an interruption on the adaptive process that manufactures the 'filmic fact.' This intervening 'vast phenomena' includes acquiring a budget and developing a script through to on-set busyness and Fincher's use of many takes, and then in post-production the continual use of CGI, that leads to a series of possible enhancements or limitations that can be found in the practice of adapting an already translated text into the American studio and distribution system. Fincher's unique method within the 'cinematic fact' is expressed in these extra-textual materials, that will be used in this paper & presentation to authorize filmmaking's innate ability to construct false realities from pre-existent material that moves beyond the analysis of medial differences in adaptations.

Keywords: cinematic, filmic, medial, semiotics, textual

Stieg Larsson's Swedish novel *Män som hatar kvinnor* (Men Who Hate Women) had its publication and worldwide success after his death in 2005. The book was translated into English by Reg Keeland (pseudonym of Steven T. Murray) and was published in 2008 with a change of title to *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo* - a first change that Larsson was not alive to witness. A Swedish film adaptation came in 2009 and was quickly followed by an American adaptation in 2011 directed by David Fincher. The latter film stands as an example of an American filmmaking manipulation, of a cinematic adaptation that manipulates its source text into the features of its contextual form. The word 'manipulation' is neither used positively or negatively here, instead it is a word of almost inevitability in the practice of adaptation, and a certainty in adaptations of an already translated text – the 'cross-cultural' adaptation.

To understand the extent of this manipulation in its recreation of a proposed novelistic real, the actuality of what film is compared to the literary text must be identified, by returning to the film

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semiotics and structural linguistics of Christian Metz (1974). His expansion on the ‘cinematic fact’ and the ‘filmic fact’ posed by Gilbert Cohen-Seat (1946) can distinguish how the economic and technological interruptions outside a filmic text can lead to an innate manipulation, that is accentuated when items of the cross-cultural are present. It is in these structuralist foundations where other intertextual intrigues can be sought in line with the academic progression of adaptation scholarship. The field has been largely removed from the binary one source – one adaptation analysis, entering the realm of the many-text, or in the words of Marcus Nicholls (2021) in his fascinating work on adaptation and metaphorical entropy: the ‘mental construct’ of a ‘destabilized single source text.’

This paper will establish how the return to Metz’ early structuralist thought on cinema as language, and particularly the ideas of ‘cinematic fact,’ and ‘filmic fact,’ can work towards a theoretical apparatus on adaptations that necessarily analyses textual properties within the texts’ cultural systems. First the relativeness of this theoretical return will be shown in a summary of key literature, then the apparatus will be applied to Fincher’s *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo*, by contextualizing the film’s pre-production and analysing the extra-textual materials of behind-the-scenes footage (2012) and the director’s commentary (2012) to position the ‘cinematic fact’ as leading to an American filmmaking manipulation of pre-existing cross-cultural texts.

Theoretical and methodological hybrids

Christian Metz is commonly viewed as a founder of contemporary film studies, and his work on cinema as language, and film semiotics can still be found in the field - even long after post-structuralism gained the most standing and Gilles Deleuze (1983) pronounced ‘change’ as the only constant, rather than ‘structure.’ Adaptation scholarship outside of literature and film departments has grown into wider cultural studies that now greatly dismisses the simplicity of comparative textual analysis that leans on aesthetic formalism. Medial differences and the misconception of fidelity have been vigorously interrogated, that is comprehensively summarised in Robert Stam’s (2005) introduction to *Literature and Film: a guide to the theory and practice of film adaptation*, that acts as an entry to 21st century adaptation thinking. Stam writes:

‘The shift, in adaptation, from a single-track, uniquely verbal medium such as the novel to a multitrack medium like film, which can play not only with words (written and spoken) but also with music, sound effects, and moving photographic images, explains the unlikelihood, and I would suggest even the undesirability, of literal fidelity.’ (17)

By this point adaptation theory had been through a series of retheorizations with Stam himself, Thomas Leitch, and others updating formal theories of comparative criticism, with, as Kamilla Elliot (2017) writes:

‘...a democratizing Barthesian intertextuality, a Derridean deconstruction of originals and copies, Bakhtinian dialogic exchanges, Kristevan post- structuralist intertextuality, and a Foucaultian demystification of the author to revivify adaptation scholarship.’ (679)

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This progression is detailed in Elliot's two vital essays *Rethinking Formal-Cultural and Textual-Contextual Divides in Adaptation Studies* (2014), and *Adaptation Theory and Adaptation Scholarship* (2017), where she discusses the preoccupation that the field had with aesthetic formalism and the structuralist/post-structuralist development from the 1970s-90s, until much of the retheorization begun venturing into post-modern cultural theories, with 'theoretical rifts,' and conflicts still ongoing. Elliot cites Deborah Cartmell and Imelda Whelehan as less concerned with updating formal and textual theories, and instead motioning for:

'...postmodern cultural theories and radical politics to redress these political and cultural inequities. Calling for academic attention to low and popular culture, with a focus on adaptations' reception rather than their creation, and for feminist, postcolonial, queer, Marxist, and other radical political readings of adaptations, they worked to radicalize humanist aesthetic discourses regarding the civilizing and elevating properties of elite art.' (680)

Since the turn of the century and more recently, adaptation thinking has been considered and encapsulated in major, almost academically canonized work, such as in Linda Hutcheon's (2013) *A Theory of Adaptation*, Julie Sanders' (2006) now influential book *Adaptation and Appropriation*, and the Thomas Leitch (2017) edited collection *Oxford Handbook of Adaptation Studies*, which acts as a newer all-encompassing refresher on adaptation scholarship. Structuralism and case study analysis of opposing texts is not without its place, nor has it been totally dismissed, as seen in almost every volume of the Cartmell and Whelehan (2008-) edited journal 'Adaptation' that proves adaptation's varied and infinite realm of academic possibilities, and longevity – earning its now given right to be a singular field rather than an attachment to film and literature departments.

Structuralism has been correctly criticized due to its hierarchal and subjective nature, often giving pointless categorical answers, but it can be conditionally utilized, and is inherent in a field that is surrounded by the 'adapting' semantics of differing sign systems of multiple texts. Elliot herself criticizes older formalist theories whilst being adamant on the theoretical mess that adaptation scholarship can often seem. This could be unavoidable in a field that spans so much contrast in type, contexts, and histories, meaning that a grand theory is effectively impossible and each specific mode of adaptation, or even each specific case study requires its own theoretical branch. Elliot (2014) writes:

'Adaptation studies needs hybrid methodologies that integrate formal and cultural and textual and contextual factors; indeed, it is most surprising that, for all our neoformalist recognitions of adaptations' semiotic hybridities and all our postmodern celebrations of their cultural hybridities, we have not yet developed methodological hybridities - a formal culturalism, a cultural formalism, a textual contextualism, or a contextual textualism.' (585)

It is in this space of hybrid methodologies where there is a place for Christian Metz, where one approach does not exclude another. Aspects of adaptation can still be viewed through the lens of the opposing texts' structural properties in understanding specific textual relationships, i.e the American

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adaptation of an already translated text, ergo used amongst cultural theories to reveal social, economic, and political qualities between the texts, authors, and contexts. It is in a sense a structuralist approach, with a post-structuralist outlook. Better still, we can centre on one idea inside of a larger theoretical system, here being Metz' 'cinematic fact' and 'filmic fact' within cinema language and film semiotics. And despite structuralism's association with the attempt to scientifically categorise texts and art, Metz' work on cinema as language can be understood as interchanging and open. Margrit Tröhler on Metz writes:

'Thus, the intent of semiology is not to establish a grammar of film – that is, a fixed, closed system of rules – but rather to describe film as an open, relational, and dynamic system, a network of codes or a set of conventions that result from practice and remain subject to constant change.' (25)

In fact, Metz (1974) concluded that cinema is not a language system and writes in his conclusion to *Some points in the semiotics of Cinema* in *Film Language* (107): 'The concepts of linguistics can be applied to the semiotics of the cinema only with the greatest caution.' It is with this caution that semiotics and structural analysis is applied to adaptations.

Christian Metz' 'cinematic fact' and 'filmic fact'

In Christian Metz' (1974) two books, *Film Language* and *Language and Cinema*, he builds towards a mode of aesthetic formalism that is akin to the linguistic analysis of texts applied to film. However, Metz is completely aware of the individuality of film as an artform and expands on Gilbert Cohen-Seat's (1946) idea of the 'cinematic fact,' and the 'filmic fact,' to posit something obviously prevalent in film studies – filmmaking is interrupted by a range of factors outside of the filmic text, that leads to an inability to quantify the filmic text as a whole product. In *Language and Cinema* (1974), Metz writes:

'... the distinction between cinematic fact and filmic fact. This distinction may be summarized in the following manner: film is only a small part of the cinema, for the latter represents a vast ensemble of phenomena some of which intervene before the film (the economic infrastructure of production, studios, bank or other financing, national laws, sociology of the contexts of decision making, technological equipment and emulsions, biography of film producers, etc.), others after the film (the social, political, and ideological impact of the film on different publics, 'patterns' of behavior or of sentiments induced by the viewing of films, audience responses, audience surveys, mythology of stars, etc.), and, finally, others during the film but aside from and outside of it (the social ritual of the projection of the film - less formal than in the classic theater, but retaining its sobriety even in everyday sociocultural situations - the furnishing and decoration of the theater, the technical methods of operation of the projectionist, the role of the theater attendants - that is to say their function in various economic or symbolic systems, which does not detract from their practical inutility - etc.).' (12)

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It is important to note here that this idea has evolved to suit an exhibition landscape that is almost entirely digital and not restricted to theatrical distribution, and as will be seen with *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo* the technological advancements of CGI and computer-based editing have increased the interruption of the ‘cinematic fact.’ The final part of this extract from Metz is somewhat outdated considering the almost extinction of projectionists, and it drifts towards reception theory, which will not be looked at in any depth in this paper. However, Metz’ thought holds true, that film is distinguished by that ‘vast ensemble of phenomena’, perhaps even more so than the text itself, which could ultimately point to a mode of analysis that finds the greater cultural differences outside the textual boundaries of the ‘cross-cultural’ adaptation.

These ideas are ever-present in filmmaking, but when specifically related to adaptations they harken to the relationships between the involved texts. In this paper’s case study Stieg Larsson’s source text has clear, perhaps unachieved, thematic aims of highlighting systematic abuse against women, yet resides in the popular crime genre, and could be described as searching for a real, or an alternative real. Larsson portrays a contemporary Swedish setting, a detective serial-killer plot that is far-fetched but not implausible, and uses characters that whilst exaggerated would still belong in everyday society (muckraking journalists, introverted hackers, mega-corporation executives, etc.). Therefore, the novel poses a type of textual reality, that is experienced through a reader imagining that reality as they interact with the text. It is phenomenologically limiting to announce readers as picturing in their mind every word, line, and scene, but the novelistic form is built upon linguistic signs that signify from existing verbal systems to create a proposed real, albeit invisible experience.

The filmic form differs in that it is presenting an already tangible reality, in that as a viewing spectator we are witnessing the use of visible pre-existing signifying objects. In *The Cinema: Language or language system* from *Film Language* (1974), Metz writes:

‘In the cinema, aesthetic expressiveness is grafted onto natural expressiveness – that of the landscape or face the film shows us. In the verbal arts, it is grafted not onto any genuine prior expressiveness, but also onto a conventional *signification* – that of language – which is generally inexpressive. Consequently, the introduction of the aesthetic dimension – expressiveness added to expressiveness – into the cinema is made with ease: An easy art, the cinema is in constant danger of falling victim to this easiness.’ (77)

From here Metz could be seen to invite those artistic hierarchies that commonly proliferate interdisciplinary studies of literature and film; however, he is acknowledging the juxtaposed realities that both forms seek to create. The manipulation, again viewed as neither positive nor negative, comes generally in filmmaking practice due its nature on a textual level in its shot choreography, in editing, in the use of sound etc, aligning with Robert Stam’s (2005: 21) description of film as a ‘multitrack medium.’ In adaptations, it is the manipulation of a textual reality already envisioned, with Metz proposing that you can separate that textual manipulation, the ‘filmic fact’, from the many influences of the ‘cinematic fact.’ He writes in *Language and Cinema* (1974):

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‘The cinematic object is, in fact, immense and heteroclitic, and sufficiently large so that some of its dimensions - for example the economic and technological - are excluded from the domain of a semiotic analysis.’ (17)

This paper contends that the inescapable manipulation of the textual reality is formed in the cinematic fact, that could disregard any intentions from the adapter/filmmakers. In the American filmmaking context, and with David Fincher as a filmmaker, there are specific ‘cinematic facts.’ These include budget amassing by a major American studio, a script-writing phase, a lengthy casting process, a densely populated crew on set, the editing, and the marketing campaign etc. Fincher’s method as a filmmaker means that there is also the meticulous use of many takes, and the extensive employment of Computer-Generated Images. In both behind-the-scenes footage and Fincher’s commentary, these specific ‘cinematic facts’ are detailed, and by focusing mostly on Fincher’s style on set and his use of CGI, moments from these extra-textual materials will be presented to see how they impact the textual finalities in the adaptative process of working from a ‘cross-cultural’ item.

Mass pre-production influence

An English-language adaptation of Stieg Larsson’s novel was inevitable, given the English translation’s worldwide success, even with its proximity to the Swedish adaptation that made efforts to not market itself as a foreign language film in the US and the UK (Mazdon, 2017). Produced by Columbia Pictures and Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, and distributed by Sony Pictures Releasing, the David Fincher directed 2011 film belongs to the Hollywood studio system – a ‘cinematic fact’ that separates it from the Swedish film that was governmentally funded. This could mean that the film is designed to serve the market rather than the story it is adapting, however hiring an established filmmaker, and giving them full creative licence lessens the studio’s impacts of monetary goals in the text. Fincher’s creative licence may counteract the outside influences of the studio, yet he comes with a history of making financially successful films, alongside a history of disliking studio input (Nayman, 2021: 8-19).

The economic workings of an adaptation are detailed in Simone Murray’s (2011) book *The Adaptation Industry: The Cultural Economy of Contemporary Literary Adaptation*, where she writes:

‘The Screenwriter’s essential professional skill lies precisely in effecting a form of creative simultaneous translation between the semiotic systems of both print and screen domains, reconstituting the effects of one in the formal vocabulary of the other.’ (134)

Steven Zallian wrote the script, which is where the technicalities of adaptation occur, in transforming literary code to screenwriting code in an ‘intersemiotic transposition’ (one sign system to another), acting as a secondary translation of Larsson’s original text (Jakobson, 1959). This increases the distance between the practice of the source and the outcome of the adaptation, acting as a manipulative influence on the text, and more affecting than the ‘cinematic facts’ of the economic

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pressures on the production that matter less once a screenwriter and director are properly working on the film. Both Zallian and Fincher designed the film to have a five-act structure, rather than the traditional three, because the structure of the books plot required an opening and denouement that include subplots seen as vital to the development of the central characters. This brings the film closer to the book narratively and shows that despite the manipulation of scriptwriting to condense a novel's length to a film's runtime, the film aligns with structural elements of Larsson's original text.

Ahead of principal photography, the production is also marked by a long casting process for the character of Lisbeth Salander. Many choices were considered (Natalie Portman, Lea Seydoux, Sarah Snook, to name a few), with Rooney Mara a somewhat unknown in the process, even though she featured in a small role in Fincher's previous film *The Social Network* (2010) (Sperling, 2020). Mara was auditioned and screen tested for a period that lasted over a year and talks in the behind-the-scenes documentary about how exhausting and frustrating the process was (8:48-). This casting style can be afforded by the vast machine of influence that a Hollywood studio can exercise, and by Fincher's pedigree as a director. Once a major film production begins sifting through countless actors for such an objective construct, the artistic originality – or that proposed literary real is moved away from, so the casting acts as a cinematic fact that interrupts the adaptive practice and speaks to the American studio system's procedures of perfectionism.

The extensive pre-production process that happens with a film of this size – a ninety-million-dollar budget – is seen by Metz as an intervention on the formalism of the actual filmic text, and the question is whether this intervention can be analysed as part of the text, or as affecting of the text. The behind-the-scenes documentary for *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo* is almost four hours long and quite comprehensive on the films production from beginning to end, however it is material coming from the production itself used on the Blu-ray extras. Therefore, its useful in relation to the filmic text, but not entirely useful on its own, because it is presented as a 'text' just as the film is – shot, edited, and presented in a chosen manner, meaning that the term 'fact' is loose when looking at these 'cinematic facts'.

Zallian's scriptwriting and the casting process are both in that documentary – two 'cinematic facts' that manipulate the source text: the script a transformation of codes, and the casting a manipulation of character. The former would suggest that translated novels can keep their plotting, and the latter is more creatively convoluted. Mara may have been the *right* person for the role after the extensive casting process but may have also had no agency in the direction of the character, which are defined by the decisions of the outer-text creatives on the film, including a highly involved costume designer spending a year of their life tweaking to an exact look for the character (28:00-). This feels more apt with David Fincher, who can be seen in the behind-the-scenes documentary as a moulder of actors, also telling Mara to prepare to lose herself in the role (4:45-).

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Fincher's design

Fincher is well known for doing many takes on set, essentially to reach a point where the actors stop thinking and reach something more natural or 'real'. What is clear on set of *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo* is that Fincher sculpts his actors in minute moments. At 2:39:10 in the behind-scenes-documentary there is footage of Fincher, Mara, the cinematographer Jeff Cronenweth, the assistant director, and others preparing and shooting a small scene of Salander in her apartment. Before shooting begins Fincher moves items around on a table in the shot, and adjusts the camera's position, then he tries Mara in a couple of different costumes. When shooting begins, Fincher acts out how he wants Mara to move across the room, indicating the specific body part he wants to see move – 'the back of the thigh,' and once the take is over he asks her to do it again, 'just not quite that low.' This is a small moment that exemplifies Fincher's meticulousness as a director, and his complete manipulation of the world he is creating in the camera. Filmmaking is seen here as falsifying reality through its naturality of the form - it is Metz' 'easy art' that is intrusive in that easiness and cannot help but manipulate textual reality.

During this moment and in every single other captured in the documentary there are a great number of people on the set, not just the already mentioned central crew and actors, but set and costume designers, hair stylists, gaffers, prop masters, camera operators, and others with unclear roles stood around. This is a singular phenomenon of filmmaking as an artistic practice that is enhanced on an American studio film with a budget to employ a large crew. It shows a collaborative artform instead of a pronounced auteur director having a singular vision that separates from Larsson's writing independence – growing the distance between the artistic intentions of the film and the result in the 'filmic fact'.

Fincher interpreted the novel from Zallian's script, which is not a concern over the possible inability to truly interpret a translated novel into the filmic form because of the constant artistic interruption of the 'cinematic facts.' However these interruptions, and the filmmaking problem-solving that Fincher details in his commentary for the film are unbeknownst to the general audience, who only witness the text, therefore the factuality and the existence of the 'cinematic fact' is fragile. The manipulation is witnessed in added technological interruptions of visual effects and CGI, something that Fincher has used throughout his filmography in a subliminal manner.

The simple, unassuming examples of this in *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo* would be digital additions to Salander's hair, improved lighting during a car chase scene, and the gunshot and injury on Mikael Blomkvist's (Daniel Craig's) head, when he is stalked by Martin Vagner (Stellan Skarsgard). These items are manipulation of the false reality that film creates, from the false reality that the source text creates, but where that manipulation has more meaning is in the attempt to create a false Sweden. In the behind-the-scenes footage Mara (3:25:22) says: 'You couldn't make the movie or tell the story without Sweden. It's one of the biggest components of the book.' Most of the production took place on location in Sweden, and the film has the strange quality of using mostly Anglophonic actors speaking English using a variety of Scandinavian accents, other than Craig. This

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is an attempt to create a type of American imagined filmic Sweden, from the English translation of the novelistic Sweden created by Larsson from his local perspective. Any cultural appropriation quandaries of that aside, the ‘cinematic fact’ manipulation occurs in the CGI enhancement of a high percentage of scenes to appear snowier and colder – and from the American perspective – more Swedish. Much of this is shown from the 1:02:00 mark in the behind-the-scenes documentary.

This is where more visible impacts of the cinematic manipulation are found and more vital questions about adaptive and intertextual relationships arise. It is important to note that when considering adaptations, it is futile taking the source text’s author as complete truth, and the adaptation as a pillaging of that. This ignores the complexities of what adaptation and artistic originality is and continues the archaic hierarchies between art and artists, as noted by many scholars from Andre Bazin (1948) to Pierre Bourdieu (1993), to the contemporary adaptation scholarship already mentioned. It would be the easy first impression to criticize the possible Americanization of a translated text and a story belonging to another culture, but one must not to pedestal the source.

Larsson’s text can still be criticized despite its stated ‘originality’ now that it has been adapted to film, with the more pertinent unjustness the manipulation of his writing after his death. In their 2009 article *Corporations, Crime, and Gender Construction in Stieg Larsson’s: The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo Exploring Twenty-first Century Neoliberalism in Swedish Culture* Anna W. Stenport and Cecilia O. Alm criticize the novel’s thematic aims, writing: ‘The novel, in fact, endorses a pragmatic acceptance of a neoliberal world order that is delocalized, dehumanized, and misogynistic.’ This criticism could be carried over to Fincher’s adaptation that establishes a similar political realm, and so the cinematic manipulation is not instantly corroding and lives in a textual constellation of ideologies that all adaptations operate within.

Having said that Metz’ cinema language, and thoughts on cinema working from natural expressiveness can help to understand the more contentious and precarious issues of adapting. Larsson’s novel, due to its subject matter and intention to speak out on the systematic physical abuse against women, includes multiple sexual and physical assaults against women, horrifying chronicles of raping and killing women, and a centralised rape scene and subsequent rape revenge involving the protagonist of Salander. In adapting these abhorrent scenes, the cinematic manipulation has more repercussions, because the audio-visualisation into the filmic form gives these scenes more reality when capturing that ‘natural expressiveness.’ In *On the impression of reality in the cinema* in *Film Language*, Metz writes:

‘The subjects of films can be divided into the ‘realistic’ and the ‘nonrealistic,’ if one wishes, but the filmic vehicle’s power to make real, to realize, is common to both genres, imparting to the first an impression of familiarity which flatters emotions and to the second an ability to uproot, which is nourishing for the imagination.’ (5)

It is in the familiarity of the realistic, that the filmic form will inherently propose a realistic situation with its moving image, which is impossible to placate through style, genre, or meaning. Thus, if

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viewing the adaptation as a manipulation (CGI was used in rape scenes in the film), then the adapting artist is in jeopardy of reverberating textual content that is a harmful reality. It is a conscious decision to design these scenes in the unrelenting way that Fincher does, but their inclusion is an essentiality in the mode of close narrative adaptation from the source material, whether you criticize the way that the film portrays sexual abuse and violence, or not. There is a question on the outside influences and systems that both the novel and film operate, because they both lead to the economic gains of their male authorship and corporate ownership, when they display such acts of abuse in popular genres.

This is investigated deeper in Johanna Schorn's (2013) article *Empowerment Through Violence: Feminism and the Rape-Revenge Narrative in The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo*, who criticizes the rape-revenge plotting of the novel, and its perpetuation of rape myths. Constructing such sensitive scenes and plots could then be seen as the artistic manipulation of harmful realities, that is not restricted to an adaptation or a source and reflects overarching issues of hegemonic authorship and financially driven imperatives, that has been revealed through the text's structural properties, perhaps veering that manipulation towards a negative.

Conclusions

This paper has not been an exercise to revert to absolute taxonomy, rather it has been an application of a formalist approach within the workings of boundless textual boundaries to offer a methodological hybrid to a particular type of adaptation. As suggested in the short literature review, adaptation scholarship may require a rethink on structuralist dismissiveness, because the work of Christian Metz is still relevant in understanding the fabrication of realities across texts and the subsequent consequences. In *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo* (2011) the structural properties almost act as a distraction to the ongoing cultural systems the texts belong to. The 'cross-cultural' aspect of Fincher's adaptation means there are additives to the 'cinematic facts' or asterisks next to each example, because ultimately there are always lost-in-translation elements.

However, what has been shown is that despite the interruptive process of the 'cinematic facts' under the 'cross-cultural' aspect, is that the outcome remains the same. The vast machine of influence surrounding an American studio film, and Fincher's own style, led to a filmic text, the adaptation, that has a close relationship with its source text, and is not a radical interpretation. Yet the manipulation is prevalent in the process, in falsifying realities from already falsified realities, even when they are invisible to the 'filmic text' and in the experience of watching the adaptation.

By investigating the relationship between Larsson and Fincher's text there is an affinity found for complex thematic issues reached for within popular contexts. Larsson's novel definitely has more of a political ambition, but by searching for a close adaptation, Fincher's film situates in similar ideas, and so criticisms of their execution will come, particularly if Fincher's interpretation is seen to have missed the intentions of the original author and appears to only capitalize on its popularity. As noted in the paper, it is pertinent to not take Larsson's work as automatically sacred in its messaging, but the cinematic manipulation of serious issues must be interrogated in line with what has been said on

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cinema as reality, and cinema as a vehicle for perpetuating traumatic reality that results in profiteering. This paper will have highlighted that this is difficult to avoid once the adaptation practice has begun, and the American cinematic form takes on the translated literary form.

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