« From Page to Screen : Interpretation, Adaptation, Betrayal? »

« To interpret a text, » claimed Roland Barthes, « is not to give it a meaning… ; on the contrary, it’s to appreciate the text’s very plurality » (S/Z, 11). This course will ponder issues in literary interpretation: its possibilities, its challenges, its limits, its dangers, its rewards. Our fundamental goal will be to analyze the « plurality » brought to every text by responsible interpretation. To that end, we will study literary works from five different genres: novel, novella, theatre, fairy tale and legend. We will test our conviction of the plurality of interpretation by comparing our texts with selected scenes from films they have inspired, using cinematic adaptation as interpretation-in-action. Our texts (and film excerpts) will include:

A novel: Henri Roché’s *Jules et Jim* (1953), which inspired François Truffaut’s film (1962)

A play : Edmond de Rostand’s 1897 *Cyrano de Bergerac*, with scenes from three films:

  - Michael Gordon, *Cyrano de Bergerac* (1950), with Academy-Award Winner José Ferrer in the role of Cyrano
  - Jean-Paul Rappeneau, *Cyrano de Bergerac*, 1990
  - Steve Martin, *Roxanne*, 1987

A fairy tale : Mme LePrince de Beaumont’s 1757 tale, « Beauty and the Beast », with scenes from Jean Cocteau’s 1946 film

A legend : « Tristan and Iseult, » as retold by Joseph Bédier in *The Romance of Tristan and Iseult*, and using scenes from Jean Cocteau’s 1943 modernized adaptation, *The Eternal Return*

A novella: Vercors’s *The Silence of the Sea*, set during the German occupation of France during World War II and compared to scenes from Jean-Pierre Melville’s 1949 adaptation

Upon completion of the course, students will be able to recognize the merits and flaws of varying literary interpretations; identify the elements that constitute a responsible, well-founded interpretation, as well as construct, present and defend their own; appreciate the presence of interpretation within cinematic adaptations of literary texts. Student final grades will be based on class participation; an oral presentation; an in-class writing exercise; a 7-pp paper; and a comprehensive final exam.
a) **Active participation in the discussion**: (10%). ONE unexcused absence is permitted; beyond that, each unexcused absence will reduce your participation grade by 1/3 (for example, a B participation grade plus a second unexcused absence = B-)

   a. Unannounced reading quizzes will also be calculated into the participation grade

b) **Oral presentation** (15% of final grade)

   Presentation and analysis of that day’s assigned text: 15 mins. (or with a partner: 30 minutes). **Do not present biographical information on the author**, unless it is particularly pertinent for interpretive reasons.

c) **Midterm** (20% of final grade): comprised of quotations to analyze (40%) and a choice of essay questions (60%).

d) **Paper** (minimum of 7 pp, double-spaced, normal Word margins, 12-point Times New Roman font) presenting an argument: a position proposed and justified (25% of final grade)

   *** A paragraph presenting your hypothesis is due 10 days before submission of the paper

e) **Cumulative Final exam** (30% of final grade): comprised of quotations to analyze (40%) and choice of essay questions (60%)

**Schedule**

**Tuesday Jan. 1**: Introduction to issues in interpretation: its complexities, its ideologies, its agendas, its manipulations. Presentation of texts.

**Part I: Forbidden Love**: *The Romance of Tristan and Iseult* and « The Silence of the Sea »

**Thursday Jan. 13**  *The Romance of Tristan and Iseult*, chs 1-3: »The Childhood of Tristan, » « The Morholt Out of Ireland, » « The Quest of the Lady with the Hair of Gold »

**Tuesday, Jan. 18**  *The Romance of Tristan and Iseult*, chs. 4-7: « The Philtre, » « Brangien Delivered to the Serfs, » « The Tall Pine Tree, » « The Dwarf Frocin »

**Thursday, Jan. 20** *The Romance of Tristan and Iseult*, chs 8-10: « The Chantry Leap, » « The Voice of the Nightingale, » « The Little Fairy Bell »

**Tuesday, Jan 25, The Romance of Tristan and Iseult**, chs. 11-14: « The Ford, » The Ordeal by Iron, » « The Voice of the Nightingale, » « The Little Fairy Bell »

**Thursday, Jan. 27, The Romance of Tristan and Iseult**, chs 15-17: « Iseult of the White Hands, » « Kaherdin, » « Dinas of Lidan »
**Tuesday, Feb. 1:** *The Romance of Tristan and Iseult*, chs 18-19 (conclusion): « Tristan Mad, » « Death »

**Thursday, Feb. 3:** Vercors, « The Silence of the Sea, » Part I

**Tuesday, Feb. 8:** Vercors, « The Silence of the Sea, » Part II

**Thursday, Feb 10:** Midterm: quotations to analyze (40%) and a choice of essay questions (60%) on *The Romance of Tristan and Iseult* (as retold by Bédier) and « The Silence of the Sea » (Vercors) OR 7 pp paper due

**Part II: Improbable Love:** “Beauty and the Beast” and *Cyrano de Bergerac*

**Tuesday, Feb. 15:** « Beauty and the Beast » (Mme LePrince de Beaumont, 1757)

**Thursday, Feb. 17:** « Beauty and the Beast » (Mme LePrince de Beaumont, 1757)

**Tuesday, Feb. 22:** Edmond de Rostand, *Cyrano de Bergerac*, Act I: « A Performance at the Hôtel de Bourgogne »

**Thursday, Feb. 24:** Edmond de Rostand, *Cyrano de Bergerac*, Act I, « A Performance at the Hôtel de Bourgogne, » continued

**Tuesday, Mar. 1:** Edmond de Rostand, *Cyrano de Bergerac*, Act II, “The Bakery of the Poets”

**Thursday, Mar. 3:** Edmond de Rostand, *Cyrano de Bergerac*, Act II, “The Bakery of the Poets,” continued

**Tuesday, Mar. 8:** Edmond de Rostand, *Cyrano de Bergerac*, Act III, “Roxane’s Kiss”

**Thursday, Mar. 10:** *Cyrano de Bergerac*, Acte III : « Roxane’s Kiss, » continued

**Spring Break**

**Tuesday, Mar 22:** *Cyrano de Bergerac*, Act IV: « The Cadets of Gascogne » :

**Thursday, Mar 24:** *Cyrano de Bergerac*, Act IV: « The Cadets of Gascogne, » continued

**Tuesday, Mar 29:** *Cyrano de Bergerac*, Act V : « Cyrano’s Gazette »

**Thursday, Mar 31:** Preparation for midterm or paper due Apr. 5 (class will not meet today due to International Colloquium in Twentieth and Twenty-First Century Studies, “Human/Animal,” San Francisco)
Tuesday, April 5: Midterm: quotations to analyze (40%) and a choice of essay questions (60%) on “Beauty and the Beast” (Mme LePrince de Beaumont) and Cyrano de Bergerac (Edmond de Rostand) OR paper due

Part III: Unconventional Love


Tuesday, April 12: Jules et Jim, Part II: «Kate» chs. 1-5: «Kate and Jules», «She jumps into the Seine», «1914: War. 1920: the châlet», «Albert—the camp fire», «Kate and Jim. Annie.»


Thursday, April 21: Jules et Jim, IIIème partie, «To The Very End», chs. 4-7: «An Island in the Baltic.» «The dream room.» «Paul.» «Stresses and Strains»

Tuesday, April 26: Jules et Jim, IIIème partie IIIème partie, «To The Very End», chs. 8-11: «Breaking-Point,» «The Tinkling Key, » «The second plunge into the river, » «The crematorium furnace»

Thursday, April 28: Conclusion of Jules et Jim, and Review for Final Exam

Final Exam: 2:45-4:45 p.m., Tues., May 3, HU 111