

# Introduction: screening French literature

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*French literature on screen* relies upon investigations of the processes of artistic, cultural, and industry adaptations. The French film industry has always cherished the national heritage of classic literature and has adapted to the screen the works of Victor Hugo, Alexandre Dumas, Honoré de Balzac, Gustave Flaubert, Émile Zola, and Marcel Proust. Hollywood has also been keen on adapting these authors' seminal works, often adapting a French cinematic version of the novel. So, too, has the British film industry sought out French classics for its costume dramas on the big and small screen. Both British and American studios have been intrigued by the possibilities that classic and popular French literature offers for their audiences, as *Les Misérables* (2012) has proven with stage and screen revenues nearly seven times production costs.<sup>1</sup> Twentieth-century figures from what was once considered popular literature now are also included in the expanding category of classical French literature, among them François Mauriac, Georges Simenon, Marcel Pagnol, and Françoise Sagan.

French literary adaptations of its own tradition became a serious cinematic enterprise with the Pathé Film d'Art series, beginning in 1908, as Susan Hayward explains:

Indeed, some of the earliest films were adaptations of novels by Zola and Hugo (as the films of Guy and Zecca at the turn of the century attest). In some respects the Film d'Art and its imitators (Pathé's SCAGL) made more prestigious and packaged more attractively a practice already in existence (albeit on a smaller scale). In other respects, it did represent a bold new departure and fixed one of the great traditions of performance (stage actor as screen star). In this way, the cultural capital of literary adaptations/costume films was doubled by the advent to the screen of the famous stage actors Le Bargy, Harry Baur, Réjane, Sarah Bernhardt, Albert Dieudonné and Gabrielle Robinne (to name but a few) ... There were sound economic reasons, closely allied to the Americans' taste for this genre, for investing (quite substantially) in these films – national cinema not just as conveyor of myth, but as an exportable commodity.<sup>2</sup>

English-language screen adaptations of French literature evince the complexity of the relationship between the two texts, the two media, as well as opening up new avenues to explore studio decisions to contract and distribute this particular type of ‘foreign’ cinema to American and British audiences. In many respects, the ‘foreign’ quality of masterworks of the French literary canon remains their appeal over the decades from the silent era to the present. ‘Foreign’ from studio standpoints includes heritage settings for nineteenth-century costume dramas, especially in the 1930s with *David Copperfield* (George Cukor, 1935), *A Tale of Two Cities* (Jack Conway, 1935), and *Wuthering Heights* (William Wyler, 1939), alongside the American versions of French classics with prominent stars, such as Robert Donat in *The Count of Monte Cristo* (Rowland V. Lee, 1934), Fredric March in *Les Misérables* (Richard Boleslawski, 1935), Greta Garbo in *Camille* (George Cukor, 1936), Charles Laughton in *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* (William Dieterle, 1939), and the nutty Ritz Brothers’ musical comedy of *The Three Musketeers* (Alan Dwan, 1939). In France, the interwar period of the 1930s proved to be a boon for literary adaptation, in particular the Marseille trilogy of *Marius* (1931), *Fanny* (1932), and *César* (1936), all based upon the works of Marcel Pagnol and Jean Renoir’s *La Bête humaine* (1938) from Zola’s famous naturalist novel of animalistic sexual attraction and murder.

The very birth of narrative cinema pays homage to French literature on screen, with Georges Méliès’s *Le Voyage dans la lune* (1902) having its basis in Jules Verne’s *De la terre à la lune* (1865), in which Baltimore arms manufacturers and mavens construct an enormous cannon, a space-gun, to send a projectile with three crew members to land on the moon, and Verne’s sequel, *Autour de la lune* (1870), in which the three crew members encounter a series of scientifically based misadventures and successfully return to Earth. Alice Guy-Blaché, often credited with the very first cinematic adaptation of a novel, directed *Esméralda* (1905), a short, ten-minute version of Victor Hugo’s 1831 novel *Notre-Dame de Paris*. This process of adapting French literature to the screen continued throughout the silent era. Jacques Feyder directed *L’Atlantide* (1921), based on Pierre Benoit’s novel *Carmen* (1926), itself based on Prosper Mérimée’s 1845 novella, and he also directed an adaptation of Émile Zola’s *Thérèse Raquin* in 1928. Germain Dulac adapted what is often considered the first serious feminist film, unlike Alice Guy’s comical *Les Résultats de féminisme*, entitled *La Souriante Madame Beudet* (1922) from Denys Amiel’s work. In 1926, Jean Epstein directed a version of George Sand’s 1837 novel *Mauprat*, best known today for its brief glimpse of a first-time actor, Luis Buñuel.

Both popular novels and classic French literature found adaptations in the silent era. Louis Feuillade’s five-part serial *Fantômas* (1913–14) was based upon Pierre Sylvestre and Marcel Allain’s commercially popular novels. Jacques Baroncelli directed silent versions of Balzac’s *Père Goriot* (1921) and Maeterlinck’s *La Légende de la Soeur Béatrix* (1923). Silent director

Albert Capellani produced for Pathé a four-part version of Hugo's *Les Misérables* (1912), as well as an adaptation of Zola's *L'Assomoir* (1909). André Antoine directed silent adaptations of classical French works for Pathé in the post-World War I era, among them adaptations of Hugo's *Quatre-Vingt-Treize* (1915), Dumas's *Les Frères corses* (1916), and Zola's *La Terre* (1921). Edwin S. Porter directed a sixty-nine-minute adaptation of Alexandre Dumas's *The Count of Monte Cristo* (1913). Dumas's *The Three Musketeers* received great popularity as a Douglas Fairbanks vehicle in 1921, in which Louis Delluc produced a far more faithful stylistic version of the novel than Henri Diamant-Berger's *Les Trois Mousquetaires* (1921–22). In his analysis of both films, Delluc proposed a theory of adaptation:

That is not, as some seem to believe, because of Douglas's violent charm and publicity. It's because the French version, concerned about *detail*, about historical minutiae, about the patient touching up of each and every individual and milieu, has almost completely sacrificed the rhythm of the novel. The American version is only rhythm: Fairbanks admits freely that there are few characters as devoid of interest in themselves as d'Artagnan. He lives only through his reactions to events, through his outbursts and caprices, through his rhythm finally, since Dumas – a murky storyteller, a summary psychologist, a historian of shoddy details – is a master of rhythm. The adapter is right to see only that to film in the novel.<sup>3</sup>

Delluc's assessment of the adaptation process deserves notice for its foresight concerning how the translation from book to screen requires insight into particular characteristics that propel plot and action.

The post-World War II period followed, with numerous film adaptations of popular French works, most significantly Henri-Georges Clouzot's *Le Salaire de la peur* (1953), based on Georges Arnaud's work, and Clouzot's *Les Diaboliques* (1955), based on Pierre Boileau and Thomas Narcejac's 1951 novel, *Celle qui n'était plus*; he also adapted Prévost's *Manon* (1949).

Robert Bresson's *Un condamné à mort s'est échappé* (1956) was based upon André Devigny's memoirs of Vichy state confinement. The Art House movement propelled many successful French classical and popular adaptations to further financial gains when released to American and international audiences, such as Max Ophuls's *Madame de ... (The Earrings of Madame de ...)* (1953) from Louise Leveque de Vilmorin's novel of belle époque Paris; *Journal d'un curé de campagne* (Robert Bresson, 1951) closely following the structure of Georges Bernanos's 1936 novel; and Marcel Carné's 1953 *Thérèse Raquin*, a contemporary retelling of Zola's famous novel of adultery, murderous passions, and subsequent paranoia. Jacqueline Audry transformed Colette's novels for the screen, including *Gigi* (1948) and a film version of Sartre's *Huis clos* (1954). Christian-Jaque, during the postwar years, made adaptations of classical French works, such as Stendhal's *La Chartreuse de Parme* (1948) and Zola's *Nana* (1955). Alexandre Astruc applied his own concept of *caméra-stylo*, the elevation of the construction of directorial

vision as narrative, to his adaptation Flaubert's *L'Éducation sentimentale* (1962).

French *noirs* achieved considerable recognition during this period, incorporating memorable cinematic experiments, among them the long silent heist sequence in Jules Dassin's 1955 adaptation of Auguste Le Breton's novel *Du rififi chez les hommes* (*Rififi*) and the hauntingly disturbing lighting of Henri-Georges Clouzot's *Les Diaboliques* (*Diabolique*, 1955). These French *noirs* could very well extend to the various reincarnations of Inspector Maigret with Jean Renoir's *La Nuit de carrefour* (1932), starring his brother Pierre, three films with Jean Gabin as the famous detective, and the French television series with Bruno Cremer (1991–2005).

The *nouvelle vague* also ushered in new, freer cinematic adaptations, especially of popular literature. While British Hammer horror films achieved popularity in France, Georges Franju's 1960 film version of Jean Redon's psychological horror novel, *Les Yeux sans visage* (*Eyes without a Face*), found critics and censors less than enthusiastic; in fact, the film's American version was cut drastically. Two film adaptations in the late 1960s of journalist Joseph Kessel's works received favourable and disappointing reviews in France. Luis Bruñel's highly regarded *Belle du jour* (1967), winner of numerous awards including the Venice Golden Lion, catapulted Catherine Deneuve to international stardom, while Jean-Pierre Melville's *L'Armée des ombres* (*Army of Shadows*, 1969) suffered greatly from its nationalistic sentiments about World War II resistance fighters against Vichy, coming after the radical shift in politics of May 1968. French art historian Rose Valland documented in *Le Front de l'art* (1961) the extraordinarily dangerous subterfuge of railway and French resistance fighters and their eventual reclamation from the Nazis of the modernist masterpieces, which John Frankenheimer filmed as an astonishing action film that involved the actual collision of real locomotives in *The Train* (1964).

The release of adaptations of classical and popular French literature has continued since the late 1960s, as evident from Claude Berri's *Jean de Florette* (1986) and *Manon des sources* (*Manon of the Spring*, 1986), based upon Marcel Pagnol's rural Provence novels, and Bertrand Tavernier's *La Princesse de Montpensier* (2010), which recaptures the romantic atmosphere of Madame de La Fayette's novella of 1662. Previously, Tavernier had relied upon descriptions from Alexandre Dumas's *Une fille du Régent*, novel and play, to provide the historical feel for *Qui la fête commence* (1975), which revealed a political world of avarice, conspiracies, and degradation that reflected much of the *gauchiste* analysis after 1968. That spirit of leftist politics interjected into French cinema waned during the 1970s when period films emerged that focused upon class and social structures of the past, as Naomi Greene maintains:

By the 1980s, it is true, films seem to grow both less confrontational and less experimental in their approach to the past. Even as the *gauchiste* spirit of the 1970s disappeared from view, French cinema began to witness a resurgence of

conventional historical genres like lavish spectacle films and literary adaptations of French classics. But although such films clearly harked back to earlier tradition, they also suggested just how much attitudes toward the past had changed. For one thing, they showed that the *Annales* approach to history, its concerns with the unknown corners of the past, its focus on the lives of ordinary people, remained strong.<sup>4</sup>

For example, Patrice Chéreau remains best known for his adaptation of Alexandre Dumas's *La Reine Margot* (1994), with Daniel Auteuil and Isabelle Adjani, and its graphic depictions of the mass extermination of French Protestants during St Bartholomew Day Massacre of 24 August 1572.

In some respects, Chéreau inherited French cinema's fascination with this tale, as evident from the two film versions from 1910 and 1914 and Jean Dréville's 1954 adaptation with Jeanne Moreau in the title role. In the spectacle of death of the massacre, Chéreau's camera passes over the terrain of murder without stopping on any particular figure in order to create '*un mise à mort*' that provides a global vision of death, geographically and sociologically.<sup>5</sup> Fascination with Romantic literature of adventure, from Dumas and Hugo in particular, began with Georges Méliès's *Les Mousquetaires de la reine* (1908) and continued with *La Reine Margot* and Philippe de Broca's adaptation of Paul Féval's 1858 novel *Le Bossu* (1997).<sup>6</sup> In his 1917 review of André Antoine's adaptation of Alexandre Dumas's *Les Frères corses*, Émile Vuillermoz praised not only the film's discipline and vision, but also its artistic experimentation, in which Dumas himself plays a role that creates a self-reflection on the synthesis of the work of literature and process of film:

Within this frame, a second framework of action develops. Dumas becomes an actor in the drama, watches himself perform, finds himself in the residence of Lucien de Franchi, enjoys the fine story of a vendetta which in turn becomes incarnate before his eyes, sees himself in the chamber of Louis Vincennes. Here there are subtleties and ingenuities of editing that confirm the infinite suppleness of cinematographic technique and its astonishing attribute – which one could call 'symphonic' – of combining chords of impressions and writing a kind of visual counterpart for several instruments. It's the plastic formula of *simultanéisme* which torments Guillaume Apollinaire.<sup>7</sup>

While uncertain whether or not the *policier*-loving audience would respond to this new vision of cinema, Vuillermoz seemed sure that very soon film would be writing its own poetry.

In twentieth-century France, there always existed a close cultural connection between literature and the screen, despite literary denouncers such as Marcel Proust opposing this new media. In *The Past Recaptured*, Proust dismisses any connection between the novel and the cinema as a fraudulent dream of the bourgeoisie, especially in film's imprecise depiction of reality:

Car tous ceux qui, n'ayant pas le sens artistique, c'est-à-dire la soumission à la réalité intérieure, peuvent être pourvus de la faculté de raisonner à perte de

vue sur l'art, pour peu qu'ils soient par surcroît diplomates ou financiers, mêlés aux 'réalités' du temps présent, croient volontiers que la littérature est un jeu de l'esprit destiné à être éliminé de plus en plus dans l'avenir. Quelques-uns voulaient que le roman fût une sorte de défilé cinématographique des choses. Cette conception était absurde. Rien ne s'éloigne plus de ce que nous avons perçu en réalité qu'une telle vue cinématographique.<sup>8</sup>

(For all those who, not having an artistic sense, that is to say, submission to interior reality, may be equipped with the faculty of reason as far as one can see, if furthermore they be diplomats or financiers, involved in 'realities' of the present day, believe gladly that literature is a mental game destined to be eliminated more and more in the future. Some wished that the novel were a kind of cinematic parade of things. That concept was absurd. Nothing could be further from what we have perceived in reality than this cinematic view.)<sup>9</sup>

Proust's condemnation of cinema's reliance upon external appearance for its reality remained his attempt to establish the novel as the only transcendent vehicle to achieve the true reality of human imagination and interiority. Obviously, Proust spent little time in the cinema and had little real experience with how intertitles of silent film, along with emotive close-ups and cutaways to symbolized objects, registered as much of human memory as did his madeleines. Certainly, Proust did not attend the Phono-Cinéma Théâtre at the Paris Exposition of 1900, which included projected images with phonographic cylinders with voices of prominent stage performers, including Sarah Bernhardt; nor did Proust attend the 1902 Gaumont 'Chronophone' system at the Société française de photographie.<sup>10</sup> Like so many of his antiquated constructions of the world, Proust's view of the cinema and its weak – if any – potential, was fortunately not shared by other prominent French authors.

Roger Martin du Gard was originally asked by publisher Gaston Gallimard to write the film script for *Madame Bovary*. In chapter XI of the third part of *Les Thibault*, Martin du Gard includes a scene of Antoine and Rachel having a sexual encounter in a private box at the cinema, during which they watch silent news reels – *Aux grandes manoeuvres* and *L'Avenir du Service Renseignements* (*Grand Manoeuvres* and *The Future of Intelligence Service*) – and a silent Western with a young heroine fleeing from thirty or so Native Americans on horseback, before leaping atop a fast-moving train, concluding the evening with scenes of 'un sauvage tam-tam' (frenzied dance) in the main feature, *L'Afrique inconnue*, which induces in the audience 'la volupté tendue jusqu'à l'angoisse' (a tense sensual delight near anxiety).<sup>11</sup> Martin du Gard was brought into the arena of cinema through the efforts of his friend André Gide, who in 1929 formed La Société d'études et de réalisation pour le film parlant, which also included Jules Romain and André Maurois. As Dudley Andrew recounts, in 1933 Martin du Gard produced a scenario, paid for with Rothschild money, of Émile Zola's *La Bête humaine* which eventually

Jean Renoir took over as his own, thereby souring Martin du Gard both to adaptation and cinema in general:

The labor, he wrote, is frustrating, often demeaning, and not even so well paid as people might imagine. The cinema might someday become a medium through which authors might narrate stories of real social and aesthetic worth, but in 1933 this seemed a distant hope, and not one worth much time or imagination.<sup>12</sup>

Not the Proustian rejection of film, but still Martin du Gard's experience with the industry would be a familiar one for many authors during the age of classic French cinema. Such disillusionment was also felt by Saint-Exupéry, whose 1931 novel *Vol de nuit* became the basis for MGM's *Night Flight* (1933), which involved an extremely protracted legal battle between the author and MGM. Both Saint-Exupéry's *Vol de nuit* and his *Courrier sud* greatly influenced Howard Hawks's *Only Angels Have Wings* (1939), which tells a tale obviously adapted from Saint-Exupéry of the hazards and bravery of airmail delivery over the Andes.

Fascination with film continually infected French authors. In Jean-Paul Sartre's autobiographical *The Words*, he celebrates his mother's foresight in taking him to the cinema, the experience of which he found compelling: 'Du noir et du blanc, je faisais des couleurs éminentes qui résumaient en elles toutes les autres et ne les révélèrent qu'à l'initié; je m'enchantais de voir l'invisible'. (Of black and white, I made the prominent colours which subsumed in them all of the other colours and only revealed them to the initiated; I rejoiced in seeing the invisible.)<sup>13</sup> Sartre also mentions going to see with delight silent film serials, among them, 'Zigomar et Fantômas, Les Exploits de Maciste, The Mystères de New York'.<sup>14</sup> Working for Pathé during the war years of 1943–44, Sartre wrote the scripts for Jean Delannoy's *Les Jeux sont faits* (1947) and for a never-made project entitled *Typhus*, which found some echoes in Yves Allégret's *The Proud Ones* (1953). He also produced the original, but not the final, script for John Huston's *Freud: The Secret Passion* (1962). Roland-François Lack's admirable study of the cinematograph within French literary works comments upon Sartre's cinematic interests and relates Louis-Ferdinand Céline's inclusion of a nostalgic moment of attending an afternoon at Georges Méliès's Théâtre Robert-Houdin in *Mort à crédit* (1936), a trip to the cinema in Octave Mirbeau's *Le Journal d'une femme de chambre* (1900), viewing avant-garde cinema in Robert Brasillach's *Le Marchand d'oiseaux* (1936), and attending Von Stroheim's *Greed* and Sjöström's *Phantom Carriage* in Brasillach's *Les Sept Couleurs* (1939).<sup>15</sup>

Film functions as a key piece of the prosecutor's crucial evidence against the accused Meursault in Albert Camus's *L'Étranger*, the moral linchpin being the relationships between sex, death, and cinema. In the courtroom, with Marie on the stand, the prosecutor explores Meursault's conscience post-matricide by having Marie reveal what his actions had been following the interment of his mother. After insinuating that the sexual liaison between

Meursault and Marie began just following the burial, the prosecutor presses Marie for details of that time, inferring that Meursault acted without conscience, and with a malevolent disdain for his mother's death:

Le procureur qui feuilletait un dossier lui a demandé brusquement de quand datait notre liaison. Elle a indiqué la date. Le procureur a remarqué d'un air indifférent qu'il lui semblait que c'était le lendemain de la mort de maman. Puis il a dit avec quelque ironie qu'il ne voudrait pas insister sur une situation délicate, qu'il comprenait bien les scrupules de Marie, mais (et ici son accent s'est fait plus dur) que son devoir lui commandait de s'élever au-dessus des convenances. Il a donc demandé à Marie de résumer cette journée où je l'avais connue. Marie ne voulait pas parler, mais devant l'insistance du procureur, elle a dit notre bain, notre sortie au cinéma et notre rentrée chez moi. L'avocat général a dit qu'à la suite des déclarations de Marie à l'instruction, il avait consulté les programmes de cette date. Il a ajouté que Marie elle-même dirait quel film on passait alors. D'une voix presque blanche, en effet, elle a indiqué que c'était un film de Fernandel. Le silence était complet dans la salle quand elle a eu fini. Le procureur s'est alors levé, très grave et d'une voix que j'ai trouvée vraiment émue, le doigt tendu vers moi, il a articulé lentement: 'Messieurs les jurés, le lendemain de la mort de sa mère, cet homme prenait des bains, commençait une liaison irrégulière, et allait rire devant un film comique. Je n'ai rien de plus à vous dire.' Il s'est assis, toujours dans le silence.<sup>16</sup>

(The prosecutor, who leafed through the dossier before him, asked her brusquely about when our liaison occurred. She indicated the date. The prosecutor remarked with an indifferent air that it seemed to him that was the day after the death of my mother. Then he said with some irony that he did not wish to insist upon a delicate situation, that he understood Marie's scruples, but (and here his tone became harsher) that his duty demanded him to rise above such proprieties. Then, he asked Marie to sum up that day when we first had sex. Marie did not wish to speak, but before the prosecutor's insistence, she described our bathhouse meeting, our trip to the movies, and our going back to my place. The advocate general said that following Marie's official statements, he had consulted the movie schedule for that date. He added that Marie herself should say the film that we saw at that time. With a soft voice, indeed, she indicated that it was a film with Fernandel in it. Silence pervaded the courtroom when she had finished. The prosecutor rose, very seriously and with a voice that I found quite moving, extended his finger toward me and spoke slowly and articulately: 'Gentlemen of the jury, the day after his mother's death, this man went to the baths, began a sexual relationship, and went to laugh at a comic film. I have nothing more to say.' He sat down, and the same silence pervaded the courtroom.)

As Vincent Grégoire contends, attending a comic film reinforces the prosecution's case against Meursault's 'la culpabilité morale' (moral sin) and his 'insensibilité' (insensitivity) in his disregard for his mother. Moreover, Grégoire plays out the logic that Camus suggests for this absurdity of accusing Meursault on such specious grounds.<sup>17</sup> Camus's sceptical use of film in

*L'Étranger* as society's condemnation of immorality aligns with his fundamental view of the absurdity of life. Here, film has attained relevance to human existence – that is, emotions and its view of humanity somehow correspond to reality; in fact, the use of such cinematic evidence for Camus points to socially constructed teleology of the screen as replication of an emotional landscape. That kind of unreality certainly corresponds to Proust's unconvincing pronouncements and to social denigration of cinema in general. This latter point fits with Camus's view of societal constraints as demanding ultimate answers for human existence, of which there are none, and for ultimate conclusions about human behaviour, whose complexities eschew any categorization. Still, the cinema makes, as it has so often, a convenient target for social censorship, as so many French authors have recognized. Hence, their contributions to the continual progress of film.

François Mauriac contributed to the screenplay of Franju's version of his *Thérèse Desqueyroux* (1962). Marcel Pagnol, of course, wrote and directed his Marseillaise trilogy. Marguerite Duras, the novelist and director, is still best known outside France for her film script of *Hiroshima, mon amour* (1959). *Le nouveau roman* found cinematic expression in Alain Robbe-Grillet's most celebrated script, *L'Année dernière à Marienbad* (1961). Julien Green, an American-born French author, wrote the screenplay adaptation of his own novel, *Léviathan* (1962). Contemporary French literary authors frequently construct film versions of their own works. Jean-Christophe Grangé co-wrote with director Mathieu Kassovitz the screenplay adaptation of his popular novel, *Les Rivières pourpres* (2000), which made forty million dollars in profits at the box office globally. Clearly, French cultural infatuation with film and its authors' pursuit of new expression in the visual medium offer a sound historical basis for this project.

Theoretical concerns about the interdependent relationship between literary and film texts, the status of the 'author', and the process of interpretation will be addressed in these essays, as will dialogical, intertextual, and transtextual approaches to both fictional and screen texts. Mainstays of adaptation theory for the past ten years, these theories have advanced beyond the strictures of literary studies and fidelity arguments that viewed film texts with derision for being supplements or mere copies of the classical work, and the equally dismissive film studies arguments against ascribing any literary attributes to cinematic art. Adaptation studies, then, once found itself in the crossfire of literary and film studies at the intellectual and institutional levels, but no longer. In this volume, theoretical concerns will be placed in relation to current scholarly perspectives on performance of the self, the staging of history and political engagement, spatial and temporal rituals of culture, the theatre of sexuality, the actor's body as encoded site of meaning, and strategies for textual production and exhibition. Cultural designations of class and gender, so much a part of the literary tradition of France, find expression in film by means of elaborate *mise-en-scène*, décor, costumes, and representations of the arts of the time.

Cultural adaptation, then, relies upon binary visual cultures: not just the time period as envisioned imaginatively in the novel, but also modern culture's filmic reconstruction of a previous period. In this sense, the negotiations between the written and the cinematic, both distanced from the actual culture, present another binary form of adaptation. Ekphrastic representation of visual culture in the novel is an adaptive process for the reader/viewer in the same way that cinematic re-presentation of a period's visual culture is an adaptive process for the audience. In a similar manner, negotiating tensions between visual cultures reflects the distance of class separation and manipulation that occurs in gender politics. Crucial moments in French history draw parallels between political upheavals in the novel and coeval crises in French society during film production, another form of adaptation. Grounding literary and screen texts within their historical contexts offers insights into another interrelationship and intersemiotic of multiple texts. Several historical periods come into play with a screen adaptation: the past moment enlivened by the literary and screen texts; the eras in which film adaptations were made; and the contemporary reception of these previous historical times. These intersections form a metahistorical conception of adaptation whereby creation, distribution, and reception interact and transform the literary and screen texts. Aesthetic issues arise in dual close readings of the literary and film texts. Textual issues also come into play, such as how films convey literary conventions – epistolary narrative, irony, subjective perception, polyphony. The literary and film texts chosen for analysis also reveal how central conventions and thematic concerns offer paradigms for the process of adaptation. Aesthetic issues also pertain to the production of these texts, especially the adaptation strategies that brought classical French literature to a global audience.

In keeping with the diversity that is fundamental to French literary and film analysis, we wanted to include a variety of textual and interpretive approaches, whether examining single films, multiple films on one novel, or several topical films related to an author. Gender, sexuality, class, politics, and social conventions become fundamental issues for many of the interpretations of these works of literature and cinema, as do relevant contexts – commercial, archival, financial, ideological, technological, and aesthetic – for determining methods of investigating texts.

We find the multiplicity of these scholarly approaches mirrors the complexity, diversity, and vitality that is classical French literary adaptation.

## Notes

- 1 Box Office Mojo claims the production budget at \$61 million, the domestic box office at \$148 million, and the total worldwide box office at \$441 million, with a first weekend gross of nearly 20 per cent of the production costs.
- 2 Susan Hayward, *French National Cinema* (London: Routledge, 1993), pp. 98–9.
- 3 Louis Delluc, 'Prologue', in *French Film Theory and Criticism, 1907–1939*, ed. Richard Abel (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988), p. 289.

- 4 Naomi Greene, *Landscapes of Loss: The National Past in Postwar French Cinema* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999), pp. 23.
- 5 Violette Rouchy-Lévy, 'L'Image des protestants dans *La Reine Margot* de Patrice Chéreau', *Bulletin de la Société de l'Histoire du Protestantisme Français* 154 (April–June 2008): 170.
- 6 Julianne Pidduck, *La Reine Margot* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2005), p. 30. Pidduck cites Pierre Guibbert's 'Le Film de cape et d'épée', *CinémAction* 68 (1993) for a lengthy list of swashbuckers throughout French cinema's history.
- 7 Émile Vuillermoz, 'Before the Screen: *Les Frères corses*', in *French Film Theory and Criticism – 1907–1939*, ed. Richard Abel (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988), p. 134.
- 8 Marcel Proust, *À la recherche du temps perdu*, XV, *Le Temps retrouvé* (Deuxième partie) (Paris: Gallimard, 1927), p. 27.
- 9 All parenthetical translations are ours.
- 10 Richard Abel, *The Ciné Goes to Town: French Cinema 1896–1914* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), pp. 12–13.
- 11 Roger Martin du Gard, *Oeuvres complètes*, Volume I, *Les Thibault*, preface by Albert Camus (Paris: Gallimard, 1955), pp. 995, 999.
- 12 Dudley Andrew, *Mists of Regret – Culture and Sensibility in Classic French Film* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995), pp. 156–7.
- 13 Jean-Paul Sartre, *Les Mots* (Paris: Gallimard, 1995), p. 105.
- 14 Sartre, *Les Mots*, p. 104.
- 15 Roland-François Lack, 'First Encounters: French Literature and the Cinematograph', *Film History* 20.2 (2008): 133–4, 135, and footnote 12.
- 16 Albert Camus, *L'Étranger*, ed. Ray Davison (London: Routledge, 1988), pp. 85–6.
- 17 Vincent Grégoire, 'Le Rôle et l'importance du cinéma dans les oeuvres d'Albert Camus', *French Review* 75.2 (December 2001): 330.