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Film adaptations and the limits of disability representation

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Examining the limits to representation

- Form and genre
- Today's focus - the value of adaptations

The value of adaptations for understanding representation

- Potential benefits:
 1. Dig deeper into specifically cinematic expressions of disability and comparisons with literary texts
 2. Address questions of authorship and 'conditions of possibility' for representations of impairments

Geraghty on analysis of adaptations (2008)

- Cinema and realism/ literature and imagination
- Tendency to prioritise 'transposition over interpretation' – narrative over other forms of cinematic analysis, mise en scène, genre etc.

Geraghty and 'the work of recall'

- Need for textual and contextual analysis (all films are adaptations)
- Impact of genre – how film makes sense to viewers
- Links to Deleuze and processes of recollection

Deleuze

- Movement-image -image as verb; to image, or image as movement
- Perception Images, affection-images and action-images

‘Images become different, become other than what they are/were, simply by being woven together differently.’

(Vitale, 2017)

Me Before You – from novel to cinema; first impressions

- Striking omissions
- Striking additions
- Mise en scène

Locations, camera angles, shots and use of light

Me Before You – from novel to cinema

- Mise en scène...

Pembroke Castle, Wales



Image on the last slide

- The location for Will's home – a large castle

Dinner at Lou's home



Image on the last slide

- Lou's dining room, in her cramped home, with seven people around the table (six visible)

My interpretation

- Class and cultural capital
- Rand's 'moocher' and rational self-actualization/self-sufficiency, without 'help'
- Moral discourses on the value of work and ambition

Spectacle in Me Before You

- Denigration of working-class males and their embodiment
- Disabled people taking up space
- The beauty of wealth

Patrick and Will



Image on the last slide

- Two pictures. The first is of Lou's boyfriend Patrick, running on a race track, wearing a shirt which says 'young entrepreneur of the year'
- The second is of Lou shaving Will, in his wheelchair, in the bathroom

Affect and the use of space



#LiveBoldly

Image on the last slide

- Lou sitting on a wall, smiling broadly, talking to and looking down at Will, who is out of this shot.

Affect and the use of light

- Metaphorical use of:
- White
- Darkness
- Snow
- Storms

Dominant discourse – hierarchical heterosexuality

- Young female audience
- Middle-class, non-disabled masculine athleticism as the ideal
- Failed masculinities - classed and embodied; loss of physical functions/
crudeness of working class physicality

Lou as central protagonist – this is *her* story

- Moral messages – ‘matter out of place’ - relocated by Will
- Discourse/POV her narrative in the film/comparative polyphony of novel;

Before and after her Pygmalion-esque conversion

- Lou is the predominant spectacle - colour palette for the film



Visuals on the last slide

- Three images of Lou, first in bright colours and 'wacky clothing' laughing in obvious joy at bumblebee tights bought by Will for her birthday.
- The second is a pink pair of 'irregular choice' shoes
- The third is of Lou looking chic in plainer clothing and bumblebee tights

Visual metaphors – Lou brings...

- Warmth (in a cold world)
- Light and optimism
- Fun/joy

The endowment of Will's riches to Lou

- Bequeathment, rationality and puns
- Is this really a story about suicide?
- Disabling discourses

How can adaptations inform us about disability in cinema?

- Inevitability of the removal of disablement themes in adaptations?
- Move from textual form for a primarily visual (and auditory) type of expression – creation of ‘spectacle’

Thank you for listening!
