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Adaptation as Migration

Thomas Leitch

Trouble at the border

1 Nowhere are both the commonalities and the contrasts between people and texts more dramatic, and more problematic, than when they cross borders. In her revealingly titled 2010 essay “Border Talks: The Problematic Status of Media Borders in the Current Debate about Intermediality,” Irina Rajewsky contends, “By means of intermedial strategies, the possibility per se of delimiting different media re-enters the picture” (60). If intermedial moves make creators and audiences alike more acutely aware of borders and the media they presumably separate, the same thing is even more true of human migration, whose very possibility plays a decisive role in shaping narratives of national identity. Texts cross borders when they are translated, adapted, remade, updated, rehistoricized, parodied, or smuggled into other countries; people cross borders as tourists, workers, victims of human trafficking, legal or illegal immigrants.

2 Analogies between migration and textual adaptation have been implicit in the work of earlier theorists ever since the dawn of adaptation studies. André Bazin’s 1951 manifesto “Pour un cinéma impur: défense de l’adaptation” was an obvious revolt against the classical film theory of Hugo Münsterberg and Rudolf Arnheim, whose “central concern,” as Philip Rosen puts it, was “to differentiate cinema from precedent forms and media” (3). Forty years later, Mary Louise Pratt’s essay “Arts of the Contact Zone” used the process of becoming literate and membership in what Benedict Anderson called imagined communities to emphasize the ways in which what Pratt calls contact zones mark contested areas in which “cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other” (34), deconstructing the categorical areas they apparently separate by radically destabilizing them, revealing the fact that texts and genres, like individual and group identities of any kind, are always in flux.

3 It is not only illegal but legal immigration that is regulated, policed, and defined to a considerable extent by laws. This position stems from an assumption that national cultures are given, defined in contradistinction to each other, unequally desirable in
ways that can readily be defined and quantified, and forbidden from mixing unless the new hybrid is seen as specifically advantageous to the new country. And in its own way, political immigration, which might seem to challenge these assumptions, reifies them at a deeper level by selecting only an aspiring immigrant’s most recent national history as determinative and by substituting rituals of border crossing – negotiations within contact zones, as Pratt would call them – for more radical theories of personal and group identities as constantly being redefined as they emerge from a ceaseless and indefinite flux. No wonder then that the ideal of impure cinema Bazin had attached to adaptation as early as 1951 did not emerge as a major strain in adaptation studies until Robert Stam and Linda Hutcheon embraced it more than fifty years later, and that Cristina Della Coletta’s *When Stories Travel* begins its detailed exploration of the relation between personal and textual border crossing by locating adaptation in “an *agoraic* domain,” a “multicultural and multilingual marketplace” (2).

Adaptation scholars have been reluctant to embrace migration as a metaphor for adaptation. This is hardly surprising, since they have found themselves implicitly warned away from it by parties who urge very different arguments against it. On the one hand, European intermedial scholars reject the inescapably metaphorical overtones of adaptation and all its processes in favor of the more scientifically neutral language of intermediality. Their position has recently been echoed in a different key by Kamilla Elliott, who has criticized the ways in which “[a]nalogy has dominated adaptation studies” in scholars from Nico Dicecco, whose work on adaptation as performance is cited by Elliott, to Julie Grossman, whose work on adaptations as monsters is not cited, on the grounds that analogy “has worked less to theorize adaptation on its own terms than to conform and constrain it to humanities theories” (262, 263). On the other hand, discussions of immigration in contemporary politics are invariably fraught by loaded assumptions about the value and cost of immigration, the distinctions between legal and illegal immigration, the best kinds of borders to have, and the best means of regulating and policing their crossing. It is no easy task to find equivalents for these factors in the study of adaptations that cross linguistic, presentational, national, historical, and cultural borders. And it is even harder to find equivalents that preserve the understandable passion of debates about crossing political borders without succumbing to the wrong kinds of passion that express themselves in the sort of intemperate, prejudicial, or dismissive language that academics pride themselves on avoiding or transcending. Inflammatory contemporary debates about political border crossing, which regularly provide more heat than light, provide little inspiration for adaptation scholars.

Translations, it is generally agreed, are texts that have crossed linguistic borders. If we define adaptations as texts that have crossed medial borders – or, more generally, medial, historical, cultural, or performative borders – a problem immediately arises: Is adaptation more like migration, emigration, or immigration? The definitions proposed for these three processes by the International Organization for Migration, an organization founded in 1951 as the Intergovernmental Committee for European Migration and affiliated since 2016 with the United Nations, reveal that adaptation has distinct features in common with each one of them. The IOM defines these three terms as follows:
**Emigration** – From the perspective of the country of departure, the act of moving from one’s country of nationality or usual residence to another country, so that the country of destination effectively becomes his or her new country of usual residence.

**Immigration** – From the perspective of the country of arrival, the act of moving into a country other than one’s country of nationality or usual residence, so that the country of destination effectively becomes his or her new country of usual residence.

**Migration** – The movement of persons away from their place of usual residence, either across an international border or within a State.

**Migrant** – An umbrella term, not defined under international law, reflecting the common lay understanding of a person who moves away from his or her place of usual residence, whether within a country or across an international border, temporarily or permanently, and for a variety of reasons. The term includes a number of well-defined legal categories of people, such as migrant workers; persons whose particular types of movements are legally defined, such as smuggled migrants; as well as those whose status or means of movement are not specifically defined under international law, such as international students. ("Key Migration Terms")

To this last definition, the IOM website appends a revealing note:

At the international level, no universally accepted definition for “migrant” exists. The present definition was developed by IOM for its own purposes and it is not meant to imply or create any new legal category. ("Key Migration Terms")

These definitions reflect the consensual view that emigration involves moving away from a country, immigration involves moving into a new county, and migration involves movement from one place to another that may or may not involve a journey across national borders. But it also emphasizes at least two features that have particular relevance to adaptation studies: the fact that migration may or may not involve a journey across national borders, and the fact that the term *migrant* is much more loosely defined than either *emigrant* or *immigrant* because neither individual nations nor international organizations have considered it necessary to define it. These features are further emphasized by the fact that migrants include a much wider array of border-crossers than emigrants and immigrants combined. Migrant workers who cross borders to meet seasonal demands for their labor or move from place to place to pick crops are neither emigrants nor immigrants. Neither are snowbirds, residents of cold climates who winter in warmer climates. As their name implies, snowbirds take their cue from non-human migrants – the geese who fly south every fall and north every spring, the swallows who return to Capistrano every year – who are neither emigrants nor immigrants. Unlike emigrants and immigrants, migrants do not necessarily cross national borders; they do not have to be citizens of any particular country; they do not even have to be people. As the website of the international aid organization Preemptive Love indicates, “An immigrant always begins the journey as a migrant, but a migrant doesn’t always end the journey as an immigrant” ("Migrant vs. Immigrant"). Some migrants become immigrants (and emigrants), and others don’t—and this transformation normally occurs when nations and international organizations become invested in observing, defining, and policing their movements. The dictionary website www.vocabulary.com adds a further refinement:

*Emigrate* is from the point of view of the departure. Think *exit.*

*Immigrate* is from the point of view of the destination. Think *come in.*

*Migrate* is all about the moving. Think *move.* ("Emigrate/immigrate/migrate")
The applications of these different categories to adaptation study are revealing. High-school teachers helping their literature students negotiate unwieldy Victorian novels by showing them film adaptations of those novels are treating these adaptations as emigrants, reconfigured versions of foundational texts that define their identity (or frustratingly fail to define it when the film departs from the novel). These teachers often use the instructive label “literature on screen” to emphasize that they are primarily interested, and they expect their students to be primarily interested, in filmed versions of *Vanity Fair* or *Jane Eyre* as literature in a new key rather than cinema that happens to be based on literary sources. This tropism is often replicated in movie reviewers who, seeking to promote their cultural capital, review film adaptations as literary emigrants rather than cinematic immigrants and deplore the films’ betrayals of *The Scarlet Letter* or *The Goldfinch* into a two-and-a-half hour movie which the online reviewer f-keys describes as “Sparknotes lite.”

The most striking example of a group that defines adaptations as immigrants rather than emigrants are Patrick Cattrysse and other proponents of Descriptive Adaptation Studies, who, like Lawrence Venuti and other recent translation scholars, emphasize the role adaptations play in their target cultures rather than defining them in terms of their relation to their source cultures.

Writing fifteen years ago, Linda Hutcheon, in an unintended prophecy of vocabulary.com, urged scholars of adaptation to see it as both “a formal entity or product,” a “process of creation” that might be described as all about the moving, and a “process of reception” that determines which texts count as adaptations and which do not (7, 8). Adaptation scholars have been reluctant to focus their analyses on the process or processes by which adaptations are shaped and received. Like governmental and intergovernmental agencies, they have consistently shown more interest in both emigration and immigration than migration, and for much the same reasons. They have a foundational investment in establishing and policing the medial borders that define their departments and programs, imposing a semblance of order on the jungle of the academy. And it is much easier to assign and study adaptations as discrete texts than to theorize adaptation as an ongoing process that generates texts, as Rick Altman says “genreification” spins off genres, as “the temporary by-product of an ongoing process” (62, 54). How would adaptation studies change if we defined adaptation primarily as a process of migration that is regulated but not produced by laws rather than as a series of entities that are defined by the laws of emigration and immigration?

Asking this question does not require us to leave the metaphors of emigration and immigration behind. Instead, it brings many questions implicit in these metaphors into higher relief. Given that non-human creatures can migrate but only people can emigrate or immigrate, are adaptations more like human beings or non-humans? Textual adaptations are certainly the products of human activity, but since humans play a relatively minor role in biological adaptation as a process, plausible arguments could be made for defining adaptation either as human or as human-plus, or post-human, or simply universal. Unlike emigration and immigration, whose vectors are linear, migration can be temporary, cyclic, or aleatory. Which of these models best describes adaptation? Although both teachers and scholars of adaptation have tended to treat it as a linear process like emigration and immigration, there is no reason why it could not be defined more broadly in terms appropriate to migration. Is there a point at which adaptations change from migrants to immigrants? Presumably that happens...
when they find receptive audiences that accept them as new arrivals and perhaps even offer them full citizenship, in the way movies like Touch of Evil and The Graduate have eclipsed the texts they adapt and become accepted as the definitive versions of their stories.

15 Do adaptations, like emigrants, leave their birthplaces behind? In obvious ways, that is exactly what they do by becoming different texts. As Hutcheon points out, however, they never sever their ties to the homelands of their adapted texts definitively, at least not for “knowing” (120) audiences who recognize them as adaptations, a status that cannot be disavowed from their status as emigrants. Do they ever settle definitively in a single place? Films like Kenneth Branagh’s Hamlet certainly act as if they do, planting the flag as if they were definitive versions colonizing their new territory rather than adapting to it, even though other screen Hamlets continue to have their partisans. Do emigrant adaptations that have left their homelands ever return? Not textually, of course, since they remain invested in claiming new audiences under new circumstances in new cultural moments. If they are successful, however, they may well encourage members of their audiences to return, more richly informed, to the texts they have adapted. Even if emigrant adaptations are widely accepted by new audiences in a new homeland, they cannot indemnify themselves against further adaptation motivated by the same processes that gave them birth. In “What Movies Want,” in fact, I argued that all adaptations, like all biological organisms, seek to survive by generating new mutations of themselves.

16 In considering adaptation as migration, it is impossible to escape Elliott’s strictures against defining adaptation by analogy. The most we can hope is that by emphasizing the provisional, contingent nature of the analogy we can escape the charge of seeking to subordinate the processes and products of adaptation to a single humanistic or post-humanistic theory. But there is at least one way to turn down the heat implicit in such a loaded analogy: by focusing on the adaptive status of emigration, immigration, and migration in texts that are comfortably remote from the debates that continue to rage over the crossing of national and notional borders in the contemporary geopolitical landscape. For this reason, the following analysis places particular emphasis on border-crossings in the fifteen fairy tales L. Frank Baum published between 1900 and 1921 about the wonderful land of Oz.

Emigration, immigration, Oz-migration

17 Although Oz might seem a whimsical venue for a discussion of adaptation as migration, it is a thoroughly logical one. The Oz books are without exception stories of journeys – not of a single extended journey like the one Frodo Baggins undertakes in J.R.R. Tolkien’s Lord of the Rings, but of a whole series of journeys of illuminatingly different kinds. Seven of the first nine adventures Baum published deal with journeys his heroes, most of them female, take from familiar geographical locations to the magical land of Oz. Baum’s stories themselves have been adapted into over a hundred plays, movies, and television programs. On the whole, however, my discussion will focus on the migrations of Baum’s characters themselves.

18 In addition to providing an illuminating new metaphor for adaptation, Oz-migration casts new light on emigration and immigration, not only as metaphors but also as processes involving laws and parties that are often strikingly analogous to those that
govern adaptation. Thinking about adaptation in terms of tales of migration to the faraway land of Oz allows us to revisit our assumptions about emigration and immigration by considering both sides of the analogy, using the analogy of migration to help understand problems of adaptation and the analogy of adaptation to illuminate problems of migration by devising a preliminary grammar of border crossing that attempts to establish the relations between key terms in the processes of migration and adaptation.

**Foundational definitions**

19 Emigration and immigration, the kinds of human migration that have been most precisely defined, assume the presence of borders between two areas. In the case of personal border crossing, these are political borders between regions or nations. Some of these borders are natural, like the Deadly Desert that surrounds Oz and protects it from invaders who would be vaporized if they ventured onto its burning sands or the bramble bushes and the deep gulf between the hill on which the Yips live and the rest of the Winkie Country that Cayke the Cookie Cook and the Frogman must cross in search of her stolen cookie pan, a bejeweled gold pan with magical powers in *The Lost Princess of Oz* (50–54). Others are artificial and arbitrary, like the borders between the Winkie Country, the Gilliken Country, the Munchkin Country, and the Quadling Country within the land of Oz. Still others have been deliberately constructed, like the wall around the Emerald City whose protectors, the Guardian of the Gate and the Soldier with the Green Whiskers, are powerless to protect the city from the invasion of General Jinjur and her Army of Revolt against male subjugation in *The Land of Oz* (86–92). Borders between non-national regions, which have an important impact on tax-paying residents outside of Oz, have much less of an impact on migrants who travel only briefly from one city or state to another. But they may still carry serious consequences, as Ojo the Unlucky discovers in *The Patchwork Girl of Oz* when the tender-hearted Tin Woodman, the Emperor of the Winkies, forbids him to free his Unc Nunkie from an enchantment that has turned him to stone by removing the left wing of a yellow butterfly, the final ingredient in the disenchating potion Dr. Pipt has prescribed, even though yellow butterflies are to be found nowhere else in Oz (326–28, 60–63). In the case of textual border crossing, medial, cultural, or linguistic borders are variously perceived as absolute or permeable. Border crossings of any kind involve points of departure and points of arrival. Emigration and immigration typically involve journeys from places in which travelers hold native citizenship to those in which they are travelers, emigrants or invaders.

20 Borrowing from sociology, as many translation scholars have done, we could describe these two areas as host cultures and target cultures. Both these terms are metaphorically charged. “Target culture,” for example, is a term that implies aggressors’ deliberate and sometimes hostile attempt to hit a designated target like the land of Oz, a place Ruggiedo the Nome (later Gnome) King tries in vain to conquer in *The Emerald City of Oz* and *Tik-Tok of Oz* and to which many travelers choose to journey. No one chooses to leave target cultures like Oz except for Ozma, the Ruler of Oz, who uses her Magic Carpet to traverse the Deadly Desert with her retinue to rescue the Royal Family of the neighboring kingdom of Ev from their imprisonment by the Nome King in *Ozma of Oz* (103–4, 128–29), and the visitors to Ozma’s birthday party in *The Road to Oz*, who return to their home countries when the celebration has ended. “Host culture”
reminds us that every culture, whether travelers are journeying to or from it, plays host to émigrés, visitors, and natives alike, as Oz does to a remarkable variety of humans, talking animals, and creatures like Jack Pumpkinhead, the Sawhorse, and the Gump, who are all magically brought to life in The Land of Oz. Borders of both kinds typically imply frontiers, liminal spaces or contact zones often marked by differences in power, competence, goals, or interests, like the isolating mountain pass that makes the kingdom of Oogaboo “the smallest and the poorest in all the Land of Oz” (Tik-Tok of Oz 13).

21 Defining border crossing requires us to define the bodies between which people or texts migrate. These bodies, which I prefer to call frames or scripts in order to emphasize their constructed and contingent status, begin with nations, whether or not we follow Benedict Anderson in calling these nations imagined communities summoned into existence by the ways they have been imagined by their own members or other interested parties like the British who partitioned Palestine in 1922. As translation, adaptation, and intermedial scholars know, they also include the many languages, cultures, and media for and into which the tales of Oz have been translated and adapted.

22 Whether or not the communities they separate have been imagined, borders are commonly defined, or at least marked, by hardware: rivers, mountains, constructed barriers like the wall around the Emerald City, and of course the armed guards who often patrol them. The most obvious analogies to this hardware in textual migration are the differing affordances of various languages or media that regularly embolden commentators to announce that Marcel Proust’s novels, for example, are untranslatable and unfilmable, no matter how many times they have been translated and filmed, or the industry-wide moratorium on film versions of Baum’s stories, which had already been adapted ten times before MGM’s 1939 musical The Wizard of Oz, during the two decades following the release of this adaptation, which, as Aljean Harmetz notes, took “over twenty years to earn its money back” (19). It seems clear that different cultures offer distinctive affordances of their own, but these are much harder to define in any systematic way. Border patrols are only one subset of a much larger array of agents necessary for border crossing. These begin with the border crossers themselves, a cohort whose similarity to adapted texts depends on our attributing agency to the texts themselves as they adapt to, rather than are adapted by, others by invading new languages, media, and cultures. Rejecting this analogy, withholding agency from adaptations and reserving it for the scriptwriters or librettists or choreographers or storytellers who produce them, invites us to consider whether human immigrants themselves, assuming they are not foreign invaders, are reactive rather than active. Baum’s heroines Dorothy Gale, Betsy Bobbin, and Trot are mostly reactive in their journeys to Oz in The Wizard of Oz, Dorothy and the Wizard in Oz, The Land of Oz, Tik-Tok of Oz, and The Scarecrow of Oz. Their journeys in these stories are initiated by cyclones, shipwrecks, and whirlpools and completed when they are rescued from the dangers of places like Jinxland by magical help they did not originally plan to call on. Three other groups of indispensable agents in these transactions are helpers analogous to Quox, the dragon whom the Jinjin Tititi-Hoochoo sends along with Betsy and her friends to defeat Ruggedo in Tik-Tok of Oz (138–39) – that is, working adapters like translators, screenwriters, producers, and performers – along with gatekeepers like agents, publishers, editors, publicists, reviewers, and critics, all of whose livelihoods depend on facilitating textual border crossing, and negative facilitators like
police officers, censors, and linguistic medial purists, or the Nome King who take it upon themselves to discourage border-crossings they see as detrimental to their imperium.

**Motives for border crossing and for regulating border crossing**

23 A surprising range of motives inflect the ways migrants cross borders. Tourists like Dorothy’s Aunt Em and Uncle Henry, celebrating their rescue from their farm’s foreclosure in Kansas by being transported to Oz, venture into new places in *The Emerald City of Oz* with the idea of garnering pleasant memories and broadening their experience, like travelers on student visas who take advantage of opportunities for study their home cultures do not offer – even though, unlike most tourists and students, Aunt Em and Uncle Henry do not plan to return home. The migrants in the Oz stories often end up in Oz by processes that are remote from their own agency. Dorothy gets lost, chooses a path at random, and ultimately finds herself en route to celebrating Ozma’s birthday in the aptly titled *The Road to Oz*, and Prince Inga of Pingaree travels to Oz in the closing chapters of *Rinkitink in Oz* with his friend King Rinkitink at the invitation of Dorothy and the Wizard, who have just rescued Inga’s parents from their captivity to the Nome King, so that Glinda the Good Witch can free Prince Bobo of Boboland from his enchantment as Rinkitink’s companion Bibbil the goat. Other migrants follow the paths of Trot and Cap’n Bill, in search of the perfect birthday gift for Ozma in *The Magic of Oz*, or of the Tin Woodman, in *The Tin Woodman of Oz*, and the Scarecrow, in *The Royal Book of Oz*, in returning to their roots in order to learn more about who they are and who they might have become.

24 Emigrants and immigrants from Dorothy to her aunt and uncle are often presented as seeking a better life outside their homeland, a life defined by a new home, different social relations ranging from ghettoization to assimilation, and a new national status as citizens, legal aliens, or illegals.

25 But not all motives are so freely chosen or so positive in their tropism. In *Glinda of Oz*, Ozma and Dorothy travel to a remote corner of the Gilliken Country in the hope of preventing a war between the Flatheads and the Skeezers. All the travelers in *The Lost Princess of Oz* are seeking to recover essential treasures, including the kidnapped Ozma, that Ugu the Shoemaker has taken from them. Outside Oz, immigrants from the Third Reich were often fleeing persecution. Groups or individuals like Ruggedo may have been exiled from their homeland as a punishment for legal transgressions, or repatriated against their will to face trial under international extradition treaties. The term *diaspora*, commonly applied to the dispersion of the greater Jewish community from the Middle East, has since been applied to African, Asian, and Native American communities, all of them united by their sense that the places among which they are scattered are not the ancestral homeland to which they truly belong and should be entitled to return. Going still further along the spectrum of involuntary border crossing, individuals like Ozma may have been abducted from their homeland, smuggled across borders, and treated as chattel by criminals who observe neither the moral rights of the people they have enslaved nor the national or local laws that forbid such transactions.

26 Most adaptation theorists assume that only a relatively narrow band of this spectrum applies to textual border crossing. Yet texts are adapted and translated for an equally
wide range of motives. What we might call the aspirational myth of adaptation – that adaptations seek to remodel a canonical work for a new audience whose beliefs, perspectives, and desires differ from those of its original audience – is everywhere challenged by translations, which are rarely perceived as their originals’ equals and never their superiors. Although adaptation scholars typically theorize adaptations as supplementary texts on the model of André Bazin’s theory or the Loeb Classical Library’s facing-page translations from Greek and Latin into English, they typically analyze them as substitute texts designed to replace and perhaps even efface the texts they adapt. Educational films like the twenty episodes Robert Geller produced for the Public Broadcasting System’s series *The American Short Story* are intended to encourage their audiences, like tourists who plan to head back home, to return to the stories they adapt rather than replacing these stories. *Lady Chatterley’s Lover* was subjected to years of litigation before it was allowed into the USA. *Ulysses* was obliged to seek legal permission to be published in its home nation, as Joyce’s diaspora novel finally was in 1936. *Doctor Zhivago* owes its survival to having been literally smuggled and translated outside a homeland that initially forbade its publication. The ultimate goal of both personal and textual border crossing – to fulfill Bazin’s dream of dual citizenship that enables a perspective at once inside and outside both source and target cultures, as Dorothy and the other heroines who settle in Oz but, unlike their hosts, still retain their distinctly un-fairy-like need for food and sleep – is more likely to be available to outside observers than translations or adaptations, and more likely to be equivocal than aspirational for immigrants with bittersweet dreams of the homeland they left behind. A particularly telling example of equivocal adaptation in the Oz canon occurs at the end of *Tik-Tok of Oz* when Dorothy, who has just learned that Betsy Bobbin’s mule Hank can speak in human language now that he has come to Oz, assures Betsy that her own dog, Toto, cannot talk because “he’s a Kansas dog,” then, reconsidering her logic, summons Toto, demands that he say something, and listens to him say, “All right. Here I go!” before he runs off, never again to speak any words reported by Baum (268, 271).

These varied motives for crossing borders are complemented by a narrower range of motives for policing or preventing border-crossings. The most widely documented motive for restricting border crossing in contemporary culture is xenophobic and nativist politicians’ full-throated demand, duly enforced by immigration officials, to keep aspiring aliens away in order to maintain the integrity of a national population by maintaining the integrity of its borders, either through purification of the race or nation or by selective improvement of the race or nation. This negative motive is rarely seen in Oz, which welcomes anyone who survives the perils of the journey unless, like Jinjur or the Nome King or Ann of Oogaboo, they are bent on conquest, or in adaptation theory, whose adherents seldom announce that adapting novels merely vitiates the qualities that make cinema distinctive or that keeping the Italian language pure requires gatekeepers to prevent a translation of *Doctor Zhivago*. Instead, the adaptation police, unlike most of the gatekeepers of political migration inside or outside of Oz, are more invested in policing emigration than immigration, more likely to focus on keeping texts within existing borders in order to celebrate their uniqueness or their canonical status as untranslatable and unadaptable. The best representation of these figures in the Oz canon is Baum himself, who planned to close his saga after six volumes in *The Emerald City of Oz*, which ends with a note from Dorothy after Glinda has protected the land from further invasion by making it invisible to outsiders – “You will never hear anything more about Oz, because we are now cut off forever from all the rest of the
world. But Toto and I will always love you and all the other children who love us” (295) — a self-imposed interdiction Baum did not break until The Patchwork Girl of Oz three years later. The closest analogy to such self- anointed protectors may be gatekeepers of police states that forbid defections in the opposite direction, like the eastern European countries who spent the forty-five years after the Second World War intent on keeping their citizens behind the Iron Curtain.

**Products of migration**

The easiest of products of migration to discern are the new texts produced by migrations: translations, adaptations, remakes, sequels, parodies, pastiches, rehistoricizations, perhaps even history itself as a palimpsest of stories about the successful negotiations of the borders that mark changes from one place or time or culture or state of affairs to another. Except for human settlers in Oz, who immediately stop aging and presumably live forever, migrants do not materially change when they cross borders. So the closest analogies here must be legal and cultural, components of Anderson’s imagined communities. Depending on their disposition and experience, tourists can become better informed, more open-minded, more sybaritic, more jaundiced, or more deeply confirmed in their original prejudices. Immigrants can become permanent residents, hyphenate citizens, or illegal aliens, all of these positions marking changes from their original status as native-born citizens. Perhaps the closest similarity between the two very different kinds of products is the birth of a new attitude toward home, origin, citizenship, and the value of being insiders, outsiders, or both at once, as Dorothy is during her journeys back and forth between Kansas and Oz during the period bounded by The Wizard of Oz, in which her leading goal is “to ask the great Oz to send me home to Kansas” (118), and The Emerald City of Oz, when she finally takes up residence for good in the suite Ozma has kept ready for her ever since Dorothy and the Wizard in Oz.

**The legality and morality of migration**

Legal and moral valences are normally attached to migration only when it becomes emigration or immigration.

Although migrants can define themselves and their movements, emigrants and immigrants, whether human or textual, are defined by other people in legal terms that seek to define their identities by regulating their movements. Under the law, some types of political border crossing have been historically discouraged or forbidden, other types more or less tolerated, and still other types permitted or actively
encouraged. When Ruggedo tricks Betsy Bobbin and the companions seeking to rescue the Shaggy Man’s brother from his imprisonment by the Nomes in *Tik-Tok of Oz* into falling down a tunnel that leads to the Famous Fellowship of Fairies (120), the Jinjin asserts that:

“by the laws of our country anyone who comes through the Forbidden Tube must be tortured for nine days and ten nights and then thrown back into the Tube. But it is wise to disregard laws when they conflict with justice, and it seems that you and your followers did not disobey our laws willingly, being forced into the Tube by Ruggedo. Therefore the Nome King alone is to blame, and he alone must be punished” (124).

31 Outside Oz and its environs, immigrants in possession of significant wealth or marketable skills are welcomed with open arms; those who can prove that they have been politically persecuted in their homeland are frequently offered asylum; those fleeing gangs or abusive spouses have a tougher time; quarantined patients, convicted felons, suspected terrorists, and people on Do Not Fly lists face still more formidable obstacles. The closest analogy to textual migration is Stanley Fish’s definition of free speech as every utterance except those we have preemptively decided to ban. Plagiarism, to take the most obvious example, is not allowed, but duly licensed adaptations of the Oz stories, and indeed unacknowledged adaptations like the 2013 hardcore spoof video *Not the Wizard of Oz XXX*, are. Under American contract law, secondary rights may be assigned to parties in return for a monetary payment, but nothing obliges a producer to agree to such an arrangement. J.D. Salinger refused to authorize any film adaptations of his novels, but that did not prevent Dariush Mehrjui from producing and directing *Pari*, an unauthorized Iranian adaptation of *Franny and Zooey*, in 1995. Theodor Seuss Geisel’s reluctance to authorize Hollywood feature films based on the children’s books he published as Dr. Seuss was overridden by his widow after his death.

32 The most notable question that the porosity, inconsistency, and mutability of the laws regulating both political and textual migration raise is the question of whose rights, among all those of all the parties involved in border crossing, should be paramount: emigrants and immigrants, or by analogy texts seeking to adapt? the producers or publishers or distributors or labelers of adaptations? the source culture? the target culture? In the Oz stories, the rule is simple: anyone is welcome to move into and around Oz as long as they do not disturb the peace or threaten the established order of the benevolent despotism. A crucial complication that never arises in Oz concerns the difference between debates about the ethics of immigration, which set the rights of individual immigrants against the rights of the culture into which they seek entrance, and debates about the ethics of adaptation and translation that treat them as emigrants, setting the rights of individual adaptations and their producers against the rights of the source culture, which are enshrined in copyright laws, aesthetic canons, and calls for fidelity that continue unabated in the popular press and in many literature programs despite the absence of most contemporary adaptation scholars from this chorus.

**Questions for the journey**

33 However preliminary and incomplete, this grammar of migration is valuable because of the questions about the relations between adaptation and migration it raises or brings
to new prominence. Juxtaposing personal and textual migration reveals a number of promising new subjects that warrant further research in the light of the distinctions between migration, emigration, and immigration. One is the need for adaptation scholars to acknowledge their own roles as gatekeepers and police more openly. Along with this is the need for closer attention to the motives behind policing borders, whether the intent is to keep valued texts within a given language or canon or to keep prized potential emigrants from leaving or devalued human immigrants from entering a new home. Just as migrating across intertextual borders changes texts, migrating across political, social, and cultural borders changes people, if not materially, still in ways that raise foundational questions about what we might assume are their core identities. This grammar clearly reveals the need for a fresh debate about the relative value of the concepts of the kinds of integrity established or assumed by fixed borders and the kinds of adaptability exemplified by migrant people and texts that successfully cross these borders. It suggests the value of identifying and comparing the very different parties favored by an ethics of immigration and an ethics of adaptation. It raises questions about the relation between the question of what immigrants can do better than non-immigrants (take lower-paying or less prestigious jobs with smaller risk that they will quit or complain, for example, or enrich their host cultures by providing a richer experience for citizens already resident in that culture) and what adaptations can do better than other texts (raise questions about both their host and target cultures, for example, and about textuality and textual identity generally, that might otherwise be overlooked). And of course, it raises the question of whether, given the obvious problems in any a grammar of border crossing, the gains likely to accrue from rendering discussions of human border crossing less reflexively partisan while revealing the political motives implicit in textual border crossings are worth the trouble.

All these questions are subjects for further research beyond the scope of this essay. But one final question deserves immediate scrutiny because its inevitability is heightened by its conspicuous absence from this preliminary grammar: the status of invisible adaptations, textual migrations that have historically been neglected because the borders they cross are overlooked or dismissed as not worth theorizing. Which kinds of textual migration are routinely marked as such and which kinds are ignored? Adaptations and translations, of course, have attracted a great deal of scholarly attention over the past twenty-five years. But many texts depend on crossing borders that fly under the radar of adaptation theorists, however extensively they have been studied by other scholars. Speakers addressing audiences who are in the same space as they are still have to communicate in verbal, phatic, and performative ways that cross the boundaries between the speakers and their listeners. When speakers are physically estranged from their listeners, as so many teachers have found themselves in the pandemic era of virtual instruction, the borders between the two parties become much more pronounced and harder to cross, and the strategies for crossing them effectively must be different. These borders gape even wider in any kind of writing, from sonnets to guidebooks to novels, that is directed at absent audiences, some of whom may have been born long after the author’s death. The kinds of self-expression or self-revelation associated with diaries or journals implies a distinction between the actor, the writer, and the reflective reader, even when they all inhabit the same body. So do the most commonplace expressions of sympathy, empathy, and compassion from one person to another. The writing of histories and biographies requires the work of categorizing,
typologizing, and often mythologizing, demythologizing, or both. The projection of cinematic images and sounds must cross a no-man’s land between the projector and the screen and speakers, and another between the screen and speakers and the audience. We may be confident in our knowledge of how visual reflections and refractions are produced, but the embodiments we commonly associate with incarnation and the mutations we associate with evolution are still incompletely understood. And anyone paying attention to different people’s ideas of how infections like the novel coronavirus spread from one infected host to the next knows that there are, to put it mildly, pronounced differences of opinion on this subject.

Most of these migrations may seem to have little to do with adaptation or each other. But they all depend on crossing borders that are differently or incompletely understood or simply ignored as insubstantial or unworthy of study. My purpose in compiling this arbitrary and incomplete list is not to suggest that adaptation scholars focus on the potential analogies they offer for adaptation, but simply to raise a final set of questions implicit in the analogy between migration and adaptation: Should adaptation scholars seek to naturalize all textual migration as normal, habitual, and inevitable, as the land of Oz does, except when it turns itself invisible? Should we seek to render ourselves more sensitive to the myriad migrations implicit in everything we say and do? Or, if we wish to distinguish between borders and migrations that are worth studying more closely and those that can safely be taken for granted, on what basis should we make this distinction?

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NOTES

1. See https://www.imdb.com/user/ur55024411/?ref_=tt_urv.

ABSTRACTS

This essay explores the implications of using migration as a metaphor for adaptation. These implications become legally and morally fraught when adaptation is regarded not simply as migration but as emigration or immigration, two activities more narrowly defined by gatekeepers who are particularly invested in regulating and policing them. Drawing on examples from the Oz books by L. Frank Baum, the essay offers a preliminary grammar of adaptation as migration that emphasizes four areas: (1) foundational terms like host and target cultures, frames or scripts, and the parties involved in migrating and defining and regulating migration; (2) motives for migrating, encouraging migration, and inhibiting migration; (3) products of migrating; and (4) the morality and ethics of migration. It concludes by raising questions about
the kinds of invisible migration that involve texts and utterances crossing borders which current theories of adaptation fail to take into account.

Cet essai explore les implications de l’utilisation de la migration comme métaphore de l’adaptation. Ces implications deviennent légalement et moralement lourdes lorsque l’adaptation est considérée non seulement comme une migration mais comme une émigration ou une immigration, deux activités définies plus étroitement par des gardiens particulièrement investis dans leur régulation et le maintien de l’ordre. S’appuyant sur des exemples des ouvrages Oz de L. Frank Baum, cet essai propose une grammaire préliminaire de l’adaptation en tant que migration qui met l’accent sur quatre domaines: (1) des termes fondamentaux comme les cultures, cadres ou scripts hôtes et cibles, et les parties impliquées dans la migration; (2) la définition et la régulation de la migration (motifs de migration, encouragement de la migration et inhibition de la migration); (3) les produits de la migration; et (4) la moralité et l’éthique de la migration. Cet essai se conclut en soulevant des questions sur les types de migration invisible qui impliquent des textes et des énoncés traversant les frontières que les théories actuelles de l’adaptation ne prennent pas en compte.

INDEX

Keywords: borders, border crossing, contact zones, emigration, immigration, migration, morals, motives, Oz, products, terms, translation

Mots-clés: émigration, frontières, immigration, migration, morale, motifs, passage des frontières, Oz, produits, termes, traduction, zones de contact

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