

LITERARY TEXT AND FILM ADAPTATION: BALZAC'S ILLUSIONS PERDUES BETWEEN REWRITING AND DECONSTRUCTION

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Abstract:

*Adapting a great literary classic is a major challenge for any filmmaker: that of transposing, according to a certain prismatic perspective operated in this case by Xavier Giannoli, and not distorting the textual support (in this case Balzacian) serving as the basis for his interpretation, which relies on a number of choices, orientations, narrative ellipses at the level of characters and situations. Using a variety of cinematographic devices of his own choosing, Giannoli, relying essentially on the second part – ‘Un grand homme de province à Paris’ – of the triptych constituting the novel *Illusions perdues*, transposes the tragic tension inherent in Balzac’s novel between a mad dash for success and an inescapable vertiginous fall. Giannoli’s device is not simply a cinematic sharing of one of literature’s greatest texts and an evocation of a distant past. *Illusions perdues*, the film, speaks of today, never ceasing to refer to it. The parallels between the Balzacian story and the workings of various contemporary organs of power are obvious, with the media, social networks, fake news, trolls and the workings of closed circles of power in which other forms of privilege have replaced the quarters of nobility.*

Our paper will not only analyse the relationship between the Balzacian text and its iconic transposition, resulting from a number of choices in the selection of scenes to be highlighted within a much more substantial textual fabric, but it will also examine the extent to which Xavier Giannoli’s film highlights the modernity of a novel written in the 1840s: the director takes us into the ferocious world of the press, economic and societal issues, the prevailing power structures and the race for social success.

Keywords: Novel; Film; Transposition; Illusion; Giannoli.