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Helen E. Mundler studied at Durham University before obtaining her doctorate in Strasbourg, her HDR in Nanterre and a Fulbright research award at Western Michigan University. She has been associate professor at UPEC since the year 2000. She published two critical books, *Intertextualité dans l’œuvre d’A. S.Byatt* (2003), and *The Otherworlds of Liz Jensen: A Critical Reading* (2016), as well as a range of critical articles several of which tackle the work of A. S. Byatt. In addition, Helen E. Mundler has written novels, *Homesickness* (2003) and *L’Anglaise* (2018), and she has also published and broadcast a few short stories.

In *Intertextualité dans l’œuvre d’A. S. Byatt* (2003), I analysed *The Matisse Stories* in terms of intersemiocity, exploring how this text exploits the paintings and engravings to which it refers, and with which it is illustrated. I explored the relationship between the verbal and the non-verbal, a major thread in Byatt’s work since the second novel in the tetralogy, *Still Life* (1985), and traced it through two central Byattian questions: what are words, and, can the need for words be overcome? I also read Susannah’s experience in “Medusa’s Ankles” in terms of metamorphosis, another central preoccupation of Byatt’s fiction, comparing her with the Victorian governess Matty Crompton in “Morpho Eugenia” (1992). Matty’s wish to reveal her “real self” is finally granted, supported by many intertextual permutations in the intercalated texts contained in this novella. The present contribution moves on from my earlier interpretations by analysing “Medusa’s Ankles” in the parallel with its film adaptation (Bonnie Wright, 2018). How does the film version interpret and question the original text? What does it elide or gloss over, what does it bring out, and to what ends? Theories of film adaptation are deployed to examine the complex relationship between the original text and the film version, and to this end this article references the work of major critics in the area, such as George Bluestone, Linda Constanzo Cahir, Linda Hutcheon, Thomas Leitch and Yvonne Griggs.

Dans *Intertextualité dans l’œuvre d’A. S. Byatt* (2003), j'ai analysé *The Matisse Stories* en termes d’intersémiocité, en montrant comment ce texte exploite les peintures et les gravures auxquelles il fait référence, et avec lesquelles il est illustré. J’ai exploré la relation entre le verbal et le non-verbal, un fil conducteur dans l’œuvre de Byatt depuis le deuxième roman de la tétralogie, *Still Life* (1985), et j’ai retracé deux questions centrales chez Byatt : que sont les mots, et le besoin de mots peut-il être surmonté ? J’ai également lu l’expérience de Susannah dans “Medusa’s Ankles” sous l’angle de la métamorphose, une autre préoccupation centrale chez Byatt. La présente contribution diffère de mes interprétations précédentes en analysant “Medusa’s Ankles” en un parallèle avec son adaptation cinématographique (Bonnie Wright, 2018). Comment la version cinématographique interprète-t-elle et remet-elle en question le texte original ? Qu’élide ou que passe-t-elle sous silence ? Que fait-elle ressortir, et à quelles fins ? Les théories de l’adaptation cinématographique sont ici déployées afin d’examiner la relation complexe entre le texte original et la version cinématographique. À cette fin, référence est faite aux travaux des principaux critiques dans ce domaine, tels que George Bluestone, Linda Constanzo Cahir, Linda Hutcheon, Thomas Leitch et Yvonne Griggs.

Whatever she does, the bright forms will go on shining in the dark.

(Byatt, "The Chinese Lobster," *The Matisse Stories* 133)

Text/Image, Novel/Fragment

This article revisits A. S. Byatt's "Medusa's Ankles," one of her short stories which has received a lot of critical attention, in the light of its 2018 film adaptation. The first point which seems striking is that one of the defining characteristics of Byatt's work is its transposition of one system of reference into another, exemplified by its sustained and complex exploitation of intertextual and intratextual techniques. Quotation, allusion, intercalated texts and absent texts ascribed to characters—all these are fertile ground to the Byatt scholar. To this extent, the adaptation of her work into another medium seems particularly appropriate, and the adaptation of this particular piece the more so, because of its interest in the visual and its mixing of media. The very act of making "Medusa's Ankles" into a film seems a particularly Byattian step, a rewriting, a recasting, a recycling, an exterior manifestation of a process inherent in the text.

At the time of publication, *The Matisse Stories* (1993) marked to some extent a new departure in that the volume of three short stories includes illustrations, which seem to function as integral parts of the stories in that they are carried over from one edition to another. These illustrations, paratexts in Genette's terms *(Palimpsestes* 12), illuminate the short stories without being indispensable to them: that is to say, the stories could still stand without them. The reader could simply imagine some of the most pertinent features of those of the illustrations which are described in the text, as Matisse's Rosy Nude, in "Medusa's Ankles," and his or her reading of the text would not necessarily be compromised or diminished by not seeing the pen-and-ink illustration of Matisse's La Chevelure with which "Medusa's Ankles" begins.

And yet, Byatt chose to include these illustrations. As Kamilla Elliott observes, "[w]hat we find when we look at the history, theory, and criticism of film and of the novel is a pervasive tendency not only to treat novels as 'words' and films as 'images,' but to treat films as though they had no words and novels as though they had no illustrations" (3). Pointing to the widespread use of ekphrasis in novels, and finding a corollary in the way words in cinema tend to be ignored, she argues that "[n]either film nor novel is 'pure'" (3). This is certainly applicable to Byatt's writing: it mixes media. *Still Life* is marked by a strong interest in the visual: this second novel of the Frederica Potter tetralogy is dominated and steered by the attempt to reproduce in words the process of applying paint to canvas by writing without metaphor, a project which, while doomed to failure, allows for a very rich and highly original heterodiegetic commentary on the processes of creation, which culminates in an extraordinary meditation on the nature of language and representation, seen through the comparison of painting. This passage interrupts the narrative to take up the title of the novel:

> You may use the word "bloom" for the haze on this plum, and it will call up in the mind of any competent reader the idea that the plum is glistening, overlaid with a matte softness. You may talk about the firm texture of the flesh, and these words will not be metaphors, bloom and flesh. . . . But you cannot exclude form the busy automatically connecting mind possible

> metaphors, human flesh for fruit flesh, flower bloom, skin bloom, bloom of ripe youth for this powdery haze . . . (*Still Life* 164)

Having posited, in typically precise and demanding Byattian terms, the nature of metaphor and evoked the impossibility of excluding it, the narrator then goes on to conclude that while paint is clearly not reality and is not taken to be real, the same does not apply to language:

> It is impossible *not* to think about the distance between paint and things, between paint and life, between paint and the "real world." . . . It is not at all impossible, it is even common, not to think about the distance between words and things, between words and life, between words and reality. (*Still Life* 165)

These contemplations are only loosely tied to the character of Alexander Wedderburn, who is developing his play *The Yellow Chair*, itself a response to a painting by Van Gogh. The narratorial voice asserts itself almost essayistically, in a discursive pause, to work through an intellectual problem and formulate a position, a technique appreciated by some (Westlake 37) and condemned by others as intrusive (Buschini 99). Although not the next work to be published after *Still Life*—the neo-Victorian period intervenes, as well as the publication of a volume of short stories, *Sugar—The Matisse Stories* can be read as a continuation of this meditation on the nature of painting as against the nature of language. Certain questions which are explicitly posed in the meta-narrative of *Still Life* continue, in a more submerged way, to be central to *The Matisse Stories*: can the "language" of painting and colour be separated from the actual, verbal language, or are the two part of a continuum? Does language impede vision? And how may an artwork be represented by a text? Moreover, this meditation on painting/language, image/text can itself be read more generally as part of the preoccupation with metamorphosis which runs through Byatt's work (see, for example, Mundler, *Intertextualité* 144-90; and Mundler, "Puzzle"): "It is all a perpetual shape-shifting and adjustment," writes Ash to Christabel in *Possession* (190), and medium-shifting seems a logical next step in this great writerly project and a related step in Byatt studies.

Given Byatt's interest in what might be considered mixed-medium narrative, and given this long preoccupation with the comparison between narrative and visual techniques, it seems entirely fitting that "Medusa's Ankles" should have been made into a film. Even if Bonnie Wright's project seems from her own account to have little if anything to do with the questions raised above—she puts the emphasis on the setting of the story, highlighting the ability of film to recreate "sensory interaction" in "the heightened space between the hairdresser and their client" (Pulver)—the film version seems a particularly interesting area of study to further previous readings of this short story. Of course, this is not the first time that Byatt's work has been adapted for other media, and similar arguments might be deployed in favour of analysing the BBC Radio adaptations of the tetralogy (broadcast as *The Frederica Quartet*). In that case, questions about how words *heard* as opposed to words *read* function might be interestingly explored, since the theatrical is foregrounded in both *Still Life* and *The Virgin in the Garden*, with the production of Alexander's two plays. Moreover, the BBC itself as well as various broadcasting experiences are mentioned in Byatt's work (Frederica appears in radio and television programmes), which could make for an interesting *mise en abyme*. Neither is it the first time Byatt's work has been filmed: *Possession* and *Morpho Eugenia* (released as *Angels and Insects*) have both been adapted for cinema, although in terms of being adapted specifically to be shown on a loop in a hairdresser's, "Medusa's Ankles" is certainly a first. However, the brevity and intensity of

"Medusa's Ankles," a short story only a few pages long, as well as the fact that it was published as an illustrated text, make the relationships between the original and the adaptation particularly striking.

While analysis of the visual within the literary is an interesting avenue of inquiry, so too is the relation of the short story to the longer form in Byatt's output. The novel—grown increasingly vast and rambling—is Byatt's preferred form, although short stories have always been part of her production. The short stories range from novella-length—"The Djinn in the Nightingale's Eye," "Morpho Eugenia" and "The Conjugial Angel" come into this category—to the fragment. I use the word advisedly, not only for its echo to the explosion of the sarcophagus in "The Glass Coffin," one such short text, but because some of Byatt's short stories are literally fragments of her novels, republished and repackaged. Both "Gode's Story," and "The Glass Coffin" are grafted into *Possession* and then out of it, appearing in *The Djinn in the Nightingale's Eye*. By virtue of this displacement and new placement, these two stories provide many interesting avenues for Byatt scholars, who may analyse how each fragment fits polyphonically into the whole of *Possession*, and how it also enters into dialogue with the story of Gillian Perholt in "The Djinn in the Nightingale's Eye," where the short fragment gains in interpretation, in significance, and gives rise to new analyses of the text into which it is hyperdiegetically inserted (see for example Mundler, *Intertextualité* 179-201). These two pieces, "The Glass Coffin" a rewriting of a tale by the Brothers Grimm, even if significantly different (see Mundler, *Intertextualité* 147-8), "Gode's Story" a pastiche of a Breton folk tale, are of major interest to the study of Byatt's output.

Certain of Byatt's short stories, however, may appear fragmentary in the sense of nugatory or inconsequential, and seem to lack gravitas: some readers have shown surprise that Byatt's refutation of the "unsexed mind" (Introduction, *The Shadow of the Sun* ix) extends as far as setting a short story in the typically female emporia of the beauty salon ("Medusa's Ankles," in *The Matisse Stories*) or the shopping mall ("Baglady," in *Elementals*). Both Daphne in "Baglady" and Susannah in "Medusa's Ankles" are much preoccupied with the processes of transformation and disintegration age brings about. Even if Susannah is vindicated by her intellectual pursuits as a classicist, it might seem surprising that Byatt could be so concerned with the banal and the everyday. "Baglady" might seem even more out of character since Daphne has no academic credentials, and is merely a wife, an appendage to a travelling husband—although on deeper analysis that story proves to throw up many Byattian preoccupations (see Mundler, "Puzzle"). Nonetheless, these stories may initially seem mundane, or disappointing, or "feminine." They may seem, on first reading, to be merely "women's" stories, unredeemed, should such redemption be required, by the gravitas conferred by insertion in Byatt's greater works, and inadequate in relation to the articulate and authoritative analysis of "women's concerns" in her novels. Frederica's *cri de coeur,* "How to live?" (*Still Life* 122), Matty Crompton's resounding declaration, "It is what I will do," as she prepares to leave her post as governess to go with William to Rio de Janeiro and "the Amazons" (*Morpho Eugenia* 157), find no immediate equivalent in "Baglady," in which Daphne is for the most part a passive object, and speaks little—and while in "Medusa's Ankles" Susannah's smashing-up of the hair salon is certainly memorable, what it is not is verbal. It requires the reader to formulate for him/herself what Susannah would say, since she does not actually say it, but rather "talks around" it: "I want my real hair back" (*Matisse* 24) does not sum up Susannah's dilemma, it displaces it. The reader must deconstruct and reconstruct her story from the ruins of the destruction she wreaks, must discover the previous link in the metonymic chain she references when she talks about her hair.

"Medusa's Ankles," then, far from being light or frothy, mobilises interesting and complex narrative strategies. A number of critics have offered readings which take that general line (see Mundler, *Intertextualité*; Campbell; Wallhead; Fishwick). Secondly, it has become clear that this short story departs from Byatt's usual verbal mode and favours the visual—though I would not go as far as Jane Campbell, who posits that "the visual replaces the literary" in *The Matisse Stories* (Campbell 170). Building on those arguments, I would like to ask how the film version of "Medusa's Ankles" takes up certain of those narrative strategies using the visual medium of cinema, and how it creates "its own palimpsestic thing," as Hutcheon says an adaptation must (9).

Adaptation/Transposition/Translation

Bonnie Wright's twenty-one-minute film (figure 1) is a very recognisable version of the short story. In Geoffrey Wagner's terms it sits somewhere between "transposition (where the text is given directly on screen with a minimum of interference)" and "commentary (where an original is taken and either purposely or inadvertently altered in some respect)" (222-23). While it might be difficult to imagine an adaptation which is not to some degree a commentary in these terms, Wright's version of "Medusa's Ankles" does not venture into the territory of "analogy (which must represent a fairly considerable departure for the sake of making another work of art)" (Wagner 222-23, qtd. in Griggs 2).

Describing Bonnie Wright's film necessitates keeping in mind the various warnings: George Bluestone memorably laid down the principle that comparing a film and a novel as "better" or "worse" than one another is as fruitless as "pronounc[ing] Wright Johnson's Wax Building better or worse than Tchaikowsky's Swan Lake" given that each is characterised by "unique and specific properties" (5-6). Since Bluestone, a vast body of adaptation theory has grown, much of which posits similar arguments. For example, Thomas Leitch warns against seeing an adaptation in terms of "fidelity" (3), and Robert Stam against emitting "moral" judgments about such fidelity or infidelity (qtd. in Griggs 4). Thus, I will seek to consider the nature of the film as object rather than as a compromised text. Of course, it is impossible to avoid comparison between text and film since that is part of the purpose of this article, and, as argued above, techniques of transposition, transplantation and adaptation of all sorts are central to Byatt's work and the analysis of it central to its criticism. To this extent, I will make some comparative analysis, asking, what changes and what stays the same? What stays the same, but is mobilised differently in the film, and what is the effect of this?

Inevitably, watching the film when you know the text well incites comparisons. It is impossible not to register in passing any number of minor changes—the female hairdressers in the salon's first manifestation do wear pink overalls, but without the cream binding mentioned in the text—and to be conscious of the effect of, and possible reasons behind, others: the hexagonal black teacups after the makeover of the salon stay the same, but the "elliptical sweets, black and white like Go counters" (*Matisse* 16) are replaced with French macaroons—a symbol of continental sophistication in recent times. Obviously, a sweet, if sucked, would prevent Susannah (played by Kerry Fox) from speaking clearly, but registering the absence of sweets in the film will inevitably send the Byatt scholar back to "Sugar" and its narrator's account of writing about the visit to a humbug factory as a schoolgirl, during which she witnesses the transformation of "large buckets . . . of gleaming fluid" (*Sugar* 243) into "gleaming sheets" with "rows of rounded discs" (244). This incident is significant in that it contributes to the narrator's conviction that she must write in order to recreate "the pleasure I

usually took only in reading" (245), and thus forms an instance of the typically Byattian meta-discourse on the processes of creativity. In this way a small change sets up a significant association: it reinforces the presence of Byatt, the writer, in the film.

More obvious changes are also made: Lucian (played by Jason Isaacs) does not come across as homosexual as he does in the text, and he has a French accent, whereas he seems to be from the north-west of England in the short story. The dialogue is flattened at key points: Lucian does not talk about "placing" the Rosy Nude—the Pink Nude, as the film version more generically has it—in the salon, or say his wife "didn't think much to" it (*Matisse* 4), he says, "She didn't think nothing of it," adapting the phrase to his own French-London idiom, but losing the comic, Victoria Wood-like effect of the Yorkshire rhythm of his speech. We can only speculate that it might be confusing in a short film to present the main male character as both effeminate and married to a woman, or that a good-looking male lead was required to balance out Susannah's more homely looks, or that today's sensibilities might detect stereotyping in the original, or that the hint in the text that Lucian married a woman before understanding his own true nature would compete with Susannah's story and muddy the waters ("'We were married very young . . . before we knew what was what'" [*Matisse* 14]). Intriguingly, however, the part of Susannah's husband is played by Hugh Sachs, best known for his role as Gavin Ramsbottom, a gay character in the TV series *Benidorm*. While there is no suggestion either in the text or the film that Susannah's husband is not heterosexual, there is, in both cases, a suggestion that he habitually neglects her and fails to look at her, and the film, in its choice of actor, can be interpreted as hinting at a possible reason for this.

To return to the most striking differences between text and film, Susannah's dialogue is, like Lucian's, flattened, with the line, in italics in the original, "*I look like a middle-aged woman with a hair-do*" (*Matisse* 24) neutralised into "I look like a middle-aged woman with a bad hair-do"—the addition of "bad" completely ruining the wit of the original remark. However, Susannah's smiling discomfort is portrayed very well in the film, and the blouse she often wears—both text and film cover several visits to the same salon—is printed with a design in complimentary colours, yellow and blue, which recall both Matisse's work and the design of the cover of the short story collection with its yellow on blue lettering. Susannah's "hair-do" is also of interest. The short story lays the emphasis on the changing texture of her hair and its sparser growth: "her hair began to grow old. The ends split, the weight of it broke, a kind of frizzed fur replaced the gloss" (6-7), and she suspects that she is getting "thinner on top" (15). It does not foreground its present colour, although she regrets the "chestnut" of her young hair (6, 19). However, the Susannah of the film has allowed the natural colour of her youth to grow out and grey to grow in, patchily, without allowing Lucian to make any improvements in this respect. She wants to "render it natural-looking, that was, young" (7), but the film shows the extent of her self-delusion: her hair is unequivocally unbecoming, and Lucian's murmured reassurance when she asks if the grey is now dominant is clearly "tactful" rather than sincere. At the last appointment, where Lucian deserts Susannah and Deirdre takes over, resulting in the cut and blow-dry Susannah deems "hideous" (23), the shorter length harmonises the colour of Susannah's hair. This departure from the text can be understood as a shorthand, a semaphore, a code, in the same way as the Susannah of the film asks for a magazine so that she does not have to chat with Deirdre (played by Chanel Cresswell), and holds it up in such a way that she cannot see herself in the mirror, whereas nothing of this sort happens in the text. It is a way of communicating information so that the viewer will grasp it easily—Susannah does not want to talk to Deirdre—as well as a way of

explaining that she does not keep a close eye on what Deirdre is doing to her hair, since she cannot see her own reflection.

To return to Susannah's objections to the "hair-do," in the short story these are complex, there are layers of reference—to the terribly artificial hairdressing of her mother's time, for example (6). While the Medusa reference is retained, if diluted—there are some curls, but it would be stretching it to describe them as the "twining coils" of the text (23)—the change in the colour of Susannah's hair, the visual signalling of the sentiment that she has grey hair and is no longer trying to pretend that her youth has not passed, is very striking. The path to her smashing up the salon is rendered more direct. The short story's reference to Medusa is highly textual rather than visual, and draws on one of Byatt's areas of predilection, the classical myth. Arun Kumar Pokhrel interestingly applies Hélène Cixous's analysis of the Medusa myth to "Medusa's Ankles," arguing that Susannah's act of violence, when she destroys the salon, can be seen as one of empowerment. Indeed, in "The Laugh of Medusa," Hélène Cixous views Medusa as a source of power and creative energy, as well as a source of joy and pleasure. Cixous writes: "You only have to look at the Medusa straight on to see her. And she's not deadly. She's beautiful and she's laughing" (255).

According to this reading, in her act of destruction, Susannah does not humiliate or embarrass herself—rather, she triumphs, and becomes "beautiful" by rebelling against the male gaze. The film seems to arrive at this point too, but by different means. It is perfectly clear that Susannah feels belittled and hurt by Lucian's lack of attention, by his insistence on his need for beauty, by his neglect of a long-term client, and Susannah's rampage is a clear protest against this. The film cannot be a text, it cannot replace the pathway by which the reader may construct for him/herself the resurgence of Medusa in Cixous's terms (besides, the text still stands very well if the reader fails to do this). Nonetheless, and importantly, the film modifies the circuit of signification in the original text; it takes a very complex web and makes of it, or with it, or alongside it, an artefact with fewer and more clearly-connected nodes. The effect is to speed the viewer through a different process of associations, but to revert to the spurned turns of early adaptation theory, this is not necessarily "an infidelity"—rather, it can be interpreted as an echo, or extension, of the narrator's musings in *Still Life* about the relations between the textual and the visual.

Notwithstanding, the final hairstyle can simultaneously be viewed as a confirmation of Susannah's lament in the story, when she thinks about the importance of appearance versus content in her upcoming television interview, that "words, mere words, go for nothing" (20). Yet, paradoxically—to return to my question about what stays the same but is mobilised differently—it also creates a further layer of self-referentiality when the text and the film are studied together, in that the use of colour is very central to *The Matisse Stories*. In what seems to be a reference to *Still Life* in the short story "Sugar," the narrator—a narrator whose voice either entirely coincides with, or is extremely close, to Byatt herself—mentions "writing a novel in which the idea of Van Gogh stalked in and out of the text" (*Sugar* 236). However, in *The Matisse Stories*, it could be said that the idea of Matisse does not merely "stalk in and out": it is present from beginning to end. Several critics have commented on this over the years: Celia Wallhead argues that Byatt "makes a window through which we are invited to look at pictures" (97), and the framing of the Rosy Nude in the text is certainly important, but I go further, suggesting that Byatt "paints" with words: "Byatt sometimes pauses the onward flow of the narrative with frozen descriptions, often in the present tense, and with evocations of unchanging interiors, to emphasise the idea that words can imitate paint" (Mundler, *Intertextualité* 241, my

translation). Colours are used to set the two disparate scenes, to create the two contrasting backdrops, of the two parts of the text of "Medusa's Ankles": the first backdrop is "rosy"—Lucian chooses the Rosy Nude to go with his "colour scheme" (*Matisse* 4; figure 2) and that colour-scheme is developed with the references to the pink and cream of the curtains, and the pink cups and biscuits (5). The second backdrop is in the much more threatening colours of maroon and grey ("battleship-grey and maroon. Dried blood and instruments of slaughter, Susannah thought" [15]). In this regard the text relies very much on the visual, and on colour in particular, and so the "shorthand" or "code" employed by the film's use of colour in Susannah's hair is not, finally, out of keeping with the complexity of the text, but rather can be read as a furtherance of it which the transposition into a different medium makes possible.

Tyranny/Liberation

My contention is that paradoxically, the adaptation of this short story into a film serves to heighten how intensely visual the story is, both in the way it is written, regarding the narrative techniques it employs, as demonstrated above, and, importantly, in the critical repertoire it mobilises. The climax of the story, when Susannah manifests her dissatisfaction with her "hair-do" by smashing up the salon, can indeed be read as a return of Cixous's Medusa, a celebration of the female, an act of defiance. Yet, it is clearly also an act born of suffering and sadness, and cannot be read as unalloyed celebration: there is pain in Susannah's lament for her lost sexuality, as she remembers her young self with her student lover (22-23), and in her difficulty in accepting her ageing hair—"I want my real hair back" (24); and there is real, threatening violence in the way she sees the various bottles and pots around the salon as "bombs or grenades" (25). Moreover, to transform this act into film is to invite another interpretation, one which applies Fredric Jameson's ideas of "an aggressive mastering gaze intent on physically possessing its objects," and of a "reduction to the body" (qtd. in Walsh 484-85). In this reading, the "mastering gaze" against which Susannah reacts is inherent to the medium itself, creating a highly self-referential set of associations which constitute a complication rather than a simplification of the circuits of meaning posited above, in the image of the web with a reduced set of nodal points. In the text, Susannah rebels at once against Lucian's gaze, and against the absence of his gaze, which can be read as part of the same thing. She also rebels against what she herself sees in the mirror. In the film, while those things still hold true, the gaze of the camera is added in as a heightened manifestation of the "mastering gaze." In Linda Constanzo Cahir's terms, the adaptation allows significations from the original "to multiply in its new environment" (14). For her, adaptation of text into film amounts to translation—and a by-product of translation is the new associations its creates and which were not present in the original.

Several such new associations may be suggested here. In refusing the mastering gaze, Susannah is also refusing the reduction to the body. Throughout the text, and film, she suffers Lucian's egotistical anecdotes about himself (they are also badly told—the text notes that he is, as the Djinn remarks of Gillian Perholt, a poor storyteller [*Djinn* 242, *Matisse* 13]). When Susannah finally has major news about herself, that she has won a translator's prize and will be on television—the only time she puts herself in the spotlight—Lucian shows little interest, commenting, in both text and film, on how she will have to be made to look for the honour of the salon without congratulating her. Meanwhile the Rosy Nude functions as a silent commentary on this, hanging in the salon in the first part of the film, and often reflected in the salon's mirrors; it is a permanent fixture on the dust jacket of the hardback and the front cover of the paperback editions. The Rosy Nude is, as Lucian puts it, "so calm, so damn

sure of herself" (4). Although personified by Lucian, the Rosy Nude is only a body, not a woman, so while by virtue of its peace it highlights those qualities that Susannah lacks—she is not sure of herself at all—it also underscores Susannah's humanity and her subjection to the entropy wrought by time—another theme much explored in Byatt's short stories, and foregrounded in the portrayal of Gillian in "The Djinn in the Nightingale's Eye" (see Mundler, *Intertextualité* 206). In Byatt's own critical terms, the Rosy Nude can be read as functioning as a "temporary mirror" (*Portraits* 5). Byatt writes of the recourse to portraits in fiction: "Novelists have played in different ways with characters who use portraits from other times and places to see themselves with a difference" (*Portraits* 5). Seen in this way, the Rosy Nude is a reflection not of Susannah, but of Suzie, the young woman with "little round rosy breasts" (*Matisse* 22) who was sure of her attractiveness (not beauty [19]) and was a highly sexual being—though she is now gone forever.

I would like to suggest, however, that "Medusa's Ankles" allows for an optimistic reading by being considered alongside "The Glass Coffin"—a juxtaposition which seems more than justified by the emphasis on glass in "Medusa's Ankles." The story begins "She had walked in one day because she had seen the Rosy Nude through the plate glass" (*Matisse* 3); moreover, mirrors are necessarily omnipresent, since the story takes place in a hair salon, and long before Susannah smashes one, they are consistently foregrounded. The mirror is the locus in which Susannah meets Lucian's eyes (4), where she discerns his "excitement" (11), where Susannah's own reflection must be accepted (16). The smashing of the salon includes references to damage to glass shelves and "uneven spasmodic falls of glass" (26), and Lucian himself claims to see the salon as resembling "a great glass cage" (28). Given all this, it becomes difficult not to make a comparison with "The Glass Coffin"—not in relation to its different contextualisations in *Possession* and *The Djinn in the Nightingale's Eye*, but to the content of the tale itself.

Using "The Glass Coffin" to read "Medusa's Ankles" allows not for threads to be tied up, but for the web of associations—see Susannah's web in the mirror ("one whole mirror became a spider-web of cracks" [*Matisse* 25])—to grow wider and more complex. Like the lady in "The Glass Coffin," Susannah can be read as having been imprisoned in a period not of Freudian latency (Mundler, "Intratextual Passages" 11), which would be inappropriate to her age, but in a period of inaction, of existing as a function of others, existing as object, in that she is subjected to Lucian's art and to his whims. In Byatt's "The Glass Coffin," the sarcophagus is "whole like a green ice egg," with "no visible cleft or split" (*Possession* 63), and this can be extended allegorically to Susannah, who has been in a place where she cannot be reached, even by herself: only smashing the glass, it seems, can bring back her own sense of herself. Still, whereas in Byatt's version of the tale the lady requires liberating by a tailor who has a key—the tale in *Possession* functioning, among other things, as an allegory for Christabel's desire for sexual liberation by Ash—in "Medusa's Ankles," Susannah is the agent of her own liberation. This is an important difference in that it allows for an optimistic and feminist reading of the story, in which even the ageing, unbeautiful woman retains power and the ability to dominate, to "break out," to refuse to lie down and "die" because she has lost her looks, and to know that the glass—in this case the looking glass—does not limit or define her (a knowledge which the beautiful woman must also attain, as Maud reflects in *Possession* [57]).

The question of "liberation" can also be posed in the context of the release of the film: the "placing" (to use Lucian's term) of the film in a hair salon, where it ran on a loop for three days, in May 2018, while the business of the salon went on as usual (Pulver), seems interesting on this score. Does it

point to the exploitation of "consumerist art," in which, novelty value aside, patrons of the salon would be expected to pay as little attention to the film as most of Lucian's customers pay to the Rosy Nude? This does seem one possible way to see it, since critics have noted Lucian's consumerist attitude to Matisse: he buys the reproduction to go with his "colour-scheme" (*Matisse* 4), although his comments about it, "so damn sure of herself" (4) seems to suggest a deeper connection with it. Pokhrel sees the deployment of the painting in the text as pointing to a critique of consumer culture: "The Rosy Nude, the cynosure of the interior, is an embodiment not only of the young, beautiful, and sensual female body, but also of the naturally stabilized and commodified female body. The painting is an object of spectacle for public consumption" (397). He reads it as symptomatic of Guy Debord's society of the spectacle (397).

However, there is a more interesting way to look at this: taking up Byatt's comment on films as "temporary mirrors" (*Portraits* 5) for characters, the film adaptation of "Medusa's Ankles" can itself be read as a "temporary mirror" in which the customers in the salon see themselves. Bonnie Wright, echoing Lucian, whether consciously or not, comments on the universality of the film: "We've all sat in a hair salon and been at the mercy of someone else's opinion" (qtd. in Pulver). This suggests that each client will see themselves reflected, that is, mirrored, in the film to some extent. Bonnie Wright makes an interesting reference to degree: "What's so great about this . . . is that we spend so much time experiencing things on the internet and social media that an actual physical film screening is rare" (qtd. in Pulver). This suggests that the images we see in the film—filtered through the camera lens (figure 3) and very often through a mirror, of which the film makes liberal use—have some privileged relation to the real as well as to art.

This is a nice mirroring which Byatt scholars will appreciate, her use of *mise en abyme*, of the mirror in the text, being very central to her body of work as a whole. It allows the film to be received as a step beyond text, as a release of a Byattian narrative technique into the wilds of the "real world." The film itself smashes its way out of the sarcophagus of "mere" adaptation, and becomes its own artefact, its own thing, with a field of reference which goes beyond what could be contained in any frame or screen. To this extent, the film adaptation is indeed, as Linda Hutcheon says of adaptations, "second without being secondary" (9). Bonnie Wright's film, whatever she intended, can be understood as the Djinn bursting out of the bottle, as Byatt's genius let loose, as she approaches her last years, on the world beyond readers of literary fiction.

Figure 1

Kerry Fox and Jason Isaacs

Figure 2

Anna Shaffer, Jason Isaacs and Chanel Cresswell – and Matisse's Rosy Nude

Figure 3

Jason Isaacs and Bonnie Wright on set
https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p0699v2s/p0699vjs

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