

Translation and adaptation as recontextualization: The case of *The Snowman*

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Abstract:

In this article we propose an integrated framework especially, but not exclusively, tailored to the analysis of multisemiotic transfers/transformations that involve both linguistic and non-linguistic elements. The framework is based on the Swedish communication scholar Per Linell's notion of recontextualization. This concept, which denotes the process of inserting an element from one context into another, thereby effecting some kind of transformation, is theoretically prior to both of the concepts 'adaptation' and 'translation' as they are prototypically understood, and encompasses them. Thus, taking this concept as a point of departure allows us to avoid artificial boundaries between what is commonly considered to be adaptation-studies concerns, and that which is considered to be translation-studies concerns, in analyses of multisemiotic transfers/transformations such as film adaptations. By introducing a flexible set of 'levels' of recontextualization (medial, generic, cultural, ideological, and linguistic) and deploying them in a sample analysis of the immediate critical reception of Tomas Alfredson's international reworking of Jo Nesbø's *The Snowman*, we show how these levels work together to create various interpretative possibilities and effects for viewers. Finally, we argue that an integrated framework based around the notion of recontextualization will also be applicable in analyses of non-translation/non-adaptation texts, allowing comparisons of recontextualization phenomena across communicative forms.

Key words: Translation, adaptation, recontextualization, Nordic Noir, Jo Nesbø, Tomas Alfredson

Short title for running heads: Translation/adaptation as recontextualization

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By approaching one's discipline as a framework for learning, as well as research, we can address some important issues. (Raw 14)

'Translation' and 'adaptation' have been defined in a multitude of ways, both within translation studies and adaptation studies. Some meanings, however, are more prototypically associated with these terms than others. The prototypical understanding of 'translation' within translation studies is arguably that of *intrasemiotic* transfer/transformation involving linguistic utterances, while the prototypical understanding of 'adaptation' within adaptation studies is that of *intersemiotic* transfer/transformation. Our point of departure here is that both linguistic and other sign systems, plus both *intrasemiotic* and *intersemiotic* transfer and transformation, are involved in processes of making written texts into film. These phenomena typically blend together to create a holistic effect for audiences. Despite this, in studies of such multisemiotic artefacts, what is typically considered to be translation studies concerns, such as translations of written text and dialogue, dubbing, and subtitling, are often treated separately from what is typically considered to be adaptation studies concerns, such as transformations of plots, motifs, ideologies, genres and medium (cf. Milton 54). The typical understanding that transportation across medial borders is a defining trait of adaptations, while a similar export into new linguistic and cultural domains is regarded as a distinguishing feature of translations fails to adequately describe and analyse the realities of this particular type of cultural production. Individual works often simultaneously transcend linguistic, medial, generic, cultural, and ideological borders. In this article, we would like to sketch some beginnings of an integrated framework which can enable treatment, when necessary, of all of these aspects within one and the same study; one which sees translation and adaptation as fundamentally related phenomena, and also deeply intertwined within given works.

Several scholars have argued for a closer integration of translation studies and adaptation studies (for example Cutchins, Venuti, Milton, Cattrysse, Krebs). Most typically, one discipline is encouraged to borrow insights and concepts from the other in a toolbox kind of fashion, while others have suggested a deeper form of unification of the two disciplines by returning to common philosophical ancestries that depict all interpretation, understanding, and meaning production as at heart translational and adaptational, and thus the two phenomena as intrinsically related (Petrilli, Voigts-Virchow). Given the goal of our study, this is obviously where we wish to start from. More specifically, we believe it would be fruitful to borrow the ideas of Mikhail Bakhtin and Julia Kristeva as formulated and elaborated on by the Swedish communication studies scholar Per Linell in his book *Approaching Dialogue: Talk, Interaction and Contexts in Dialogical Perspectives* to build our framework. In this book, Linell moulds Bakhtin's and Kristeva's ideas into a theory of *communication as recontextualization*: every time we communicate, we remove communicative elements from their previous context(s) – de-contextualize them – and insert them into new contexts, i.e. recontextualize them. And every time that this movement takes place, different parts of the meaning potentials of the recontextualized elements are highlighted, and new meanings and meaning potentials are added for use in further contexts. This is a process that characterizes all forms of communication, but in activities that we typically understand as translation and adaptation, we would claim, the fact that recontextualization takes place is *thematized* – i.e. implicitly or explicitly highlighted – in various forms of surrounding discourse, and in the translations and adaptations themselves, in ways that will be described more closely later on.

Starting from this notion of recontextualization, we would like to introduce an integrated analytical framework for translation and adaptation built around the idea of *levels of recontextualization*. Five levels of recontextualization are introduced here, i.e. medial, generic, cultural, ideological, and linguistic recontextualization. These are, however, intended as a non-exhaustive, flexible inventory of categories (i.e. the research goal and/or the nature of the empirical material studied may dictate which of these categories are most relevant in any one case, and/or whether more need to be added to the list). They are also intended as 'fuzzy categories' insofar as the levels in question often overlap in a

given work (Williams and Chesterman 94). In addition to presenting the framework, we demonstrate, in this article, one possible use of it by performing a sample analysis of a series of reviews where recontextualization processes in Tomas Alfredson's film *The Snowman* (2017), an adaptation of Norwegian crime author Jo Nesbø's novel *Snømannen/The Snowman* (2007), have been thematized by Norwegian and international (mainly Anglophone) critics, in Norwegian and non-Norwegian newspapers, respectively. Looking at this reception gives us unique insight into what aspects of recontextualization processes audiences respond to most strongly, and also into concrete interpretations and views regarding the effectiveness of the recontextualizations that have taken place.

Background and framework

Several scholars both within translation studies and adaptation studies have already used the label ‘recontextualization’, however, they have done so in different and/or narrower ways than we intend here. The term has for example been used to denote pure transfer of material (without transformation) (Fishlin and Fortier 3; cited in Minier 17), to denote an exclusive focus on the historical or cultural relocation of material (Pittman 215), to single out specifically target-oriented translation or adaptation processes (Bassnett and Schäffner 10, Schäffner 141), or to pinpoint – without consideration of possible ties with other forms of communication – the special nature of translation and adaptation (Venuti). Our use of the concept as a label for general communicative processes which *encompass* translation and adaptation is rarely seen. One notable exception is Eckart Voigts-Virchow, who invokes, with respect to this, Jacques Derrida’s concepts of citability and iterability:

A serialized, adapted or translated text . . . is a text brought into movement . . . [Citability] is . . . Derrida’s term for the capacity for projection into multiple contexts (in his rejection of the idea of a literal meaning). For Derrida, the transferability and endless potential for recontextualization of writing is central . . . The iterability of signs constitutes their endless, instable play. (Voigts-Virchow 73)

Like Derrida, Bakhtin, who forms the point of departure for Linell’s recontextualization model, rejects the idea of fixed meaning. Every word is changeable, malleable, adaptable in new contexts:

The word in language is half someone else’s. It becomes ‘one’s own’ only when the speaker populates it with his own intention, his own accent, when he appropriates the word, adapting it to his own semantic and expressive intention. Prior to this moment of appropriation, the word does not exist in a neutral and impersonal language (it is not, after all, out of a dictionary that the speaker gets his words!), but rather it exists in other people’s mouths, in

other people's contexts, serving other people's intentions: it is from there that one must take the word, and make it one's own. (Bakhtin 293-4)

According to both Derrida and Bakhtin, then, all verbal interaction (not excluding translation and adaptation) is a case of taking a sign or a word from their previous context(s) and 'recycling' them, turning them into something new by inserting them into a new context. This view is echoed in Julia Kristeva's writings with regard to the unit of text: any text, according to Kristeva, is 'a permutation of texts, an intertextuality in the space of a given text', where 'several utterances, taken from other texts, intersect and neutralize one another' (Kristeva 36). In relation to adaptations more specifically, Deborah Cartmell and Imelda Whelehan similarly argue that regarding source texts 'not as primary sources but as "intertexts", one (albeit dominant) of a multiplicity of perspectives' also provides a fruitful analytical perspective (Cartmell and Whelehan 3).

Building on Bakhtin and Kristeva, Linell defines recontextualization¹ as

the dynamic transfer-and-transformation of something from one discourse/text-in-context . . . to another. Recontextualization involves the extrication of some part or aspect from a text or discourse, or from a genre of texts or discourses, and the fitting of this part or aspect into another context (another text or discourse (or discourse genre) and its use and environment).
(154)

Aspects of discourse which can be recontextualized, according to Linell, 'include linguistic expressions, concepts and propositions, "facts", arguments and lines of argumentation, stories, assessments, values and ideologies, knowledge and theoretical constructs, ways of seeing things and acting towards them, ways of thinking and ways of saying things' (154-5). Linell's list is not intended to be exhaustive, yet provides a telling illustration of the broad variety of signifying elements involved in recontextualization processes, which in turn justifies why his model ought to provide a good starting point for an integrative framework for analysis of multisemiotic

transfers/transformations, although it also points to necessary additions to such a framework, such as a consideration, for example, of medial recontextualization.

Our framework bears some similarity to the following proposal by Laurence Raw: ‘By focusing on transformative processes such as transfer and re-presentation, I view translation and adaptation studies within a more all-inclusive framework’ (3). Raw’s emphasis on the transformational effects of such processes is also found elsewhere in adaptation studies, as in Robert Stam:

The source novel . . . can be seen as a situated utterance, produced in one medium and in one historical and social context, and later transformed into another, equally situated utterance, produced in a different context and relayed through a different medium. The source text forms a dense informational network, a series of verbal cues which the adapting film text can then selectively take up, amplify, ignore, subvert or transform. (45-6)

This focus on transformation is fundamentally shared by Linell, as well as by us. According to Linell,

recontextualization is never a pure transfer of a fixed meaning. It involves transformations of meanings and meaning potentials in ways that are usually quite complex and so far not very well understood. It is therefore important to consider recontextualizations themselves as *sense-making practices*; selected parts of discourses and their meanings in the prior, ‘quoted’ discourse-in-context are used as resources in creating new meaning in the ‘quoting’ text and its communicative contexts. (155) (our emphasis)

Because of his strong awareness of the fluidity of meanings in and across contexts, Linell is careful to point out that the ‘re-’ in recontextualization is not similar to the ‘re-’ meaning ‘again’, in e.g. ‘re-copy, reprint, etc.’ (which all imply repetition without change), but rather ‘analogous to that of “re-” in e.g., reform, revise, reproduce, rework, etc.’ (155), all involving some kind of transformation. A further facet of the potential meaning of this prefix relevant to the notion of recontextualization as we

wish to apply it here, is the implication that *something* is being carried over from the old context to the new (a kernel remaining, *even though* there is change). Or, as Stam argues: ‘re-’ serves to emphasize ‘the recombinant function’ of the effects of such processes (25).

An important question at this point concerns how Linell’s model, which is devised to account for meaning-making in general, can be amended to account for such specific communicative practices as translation and adaptation. Our proposal in this regard is based on the observation that in some communicative practices, the fact that recontextualization is going on is not thematized, while in other communicative practices, such as translation and adaptation, in their prototypical senses, this *is* thematized. By recontextualization being thematized, we mean that the phenomenon somehow becomes alluded to or explicitly mentioned (by a variety of different descriptions) in various discourses surrounding translations and adaptations such as scholarly discourse, media discourse, or everyday speech, where this discourse functions to build an awareness, in and among relevant groups, of a relationship between something previous, and something existing (a source and a target), thus establishing translation and adaptation as separate communicative genres with specific traits. Recontextualization can also be thematized within these communicative genres within the texts/adaptations themselves. For translation, this can be done by means of translators’ prefaces and explanatory footnotes, but the translated text itself can also in and of itself emanate its heavily recontextualized nature (if only in the cases where the source text is also very well known by the reader of the translation). Translation studies scholar Sandra Bermann puts it thus:

Just as all literary writing entails an ongoing iterability, along with an array of intertexts and conventions, so does the language of translation. But translation adds to this its reference to a particular prior text (or ‘source’). By bringing within its scope this ‘other text’ with its clearly different language(s), conventions and historical context, *translation dramatizes the encounter with alterity* that exists to a more limited extent in every instance of language use. (Bermann 289-90) (our emphasis)ⁱⁱ

Linda Hutcheon has emphasized the significance of reception in this context: ‘we experience adaptations (*as adaptations*) as palimpsest through our memory of other works that resonate through repetition with variation’, and as the existence or intensity of this interpretive oscillation between original and adaptation may vary from case to case, so does the degree of thematization of their status *as adaptations* (8).

Communicative practices where recontextualization generally and largely do *not* get thematized would include what we normally understand by ‘original’ speech or writing (or film-making, etc.), although even here, some of the elements that are sometimes used, e.g. intertextual elements, reported speech, or quotes, are elements that may stand out as recontextualized within the texts themselves and might therefore get thematized in the surrounding discourse. An obvious example of recontextualization that usually does not get thematized is constituted by the ebb and flow of words and phrases in the novel *Snømannen* pre-translation, where several text-internal elements, such as the borrowed, international crime genre elements (expressed through words and structures), may nevertheless stand out as recontextualized, and get that kind of attention in the various discourses that surround them. By contrast, the recontextualizations of both the translated novel and the film get consistently thematized in this way.

Recontextualization in the immediate critical reception of *The Snowman* (2017)

In the following analysis, we take a look at how recontextualization has been thematized in the immediate critical reception of the adaptation of Jo Nesbø's novel *The Snowman*. The book tells the story of a serial killer who leaves a snowman as a calling card at the scenes of his crimes. It was published in Norwegian in 2007, and was made into an international, English-language film that came to theatres in 2017. The immediate critical reception of the adaptation of this novel is arguably a good case for an investigation into the many-faceted processes of recontextualization. In relation to the export of Nordic Noir television and film in general, several scholars note that various forms of transfer are at work. Yvonne Griggs, for instance, discusses the fact that 'though its national markers are an intrinsic part of its identity, it offers a branding template that has the capacity for cultural and geographical makeover on a global scale' (278), while Steven Peacock observes that such narratives tend to undergo a 'repositioning as global texts' as they are exported (98-99).

Significantly for the point that we wish to make here, Katja Krebs argues that 'an analysis of Anglo-American television's embrace of . . . contemporary Scandinavian crime drama, such as the Danish series *The Killing*, both in subtitled form (BBC4) as well as rewritten form (Fox Television), can only be understood in terms of both translation and adaptation' (2). It may seem like critics of the film *The Snowman* agree. The film was met, both in Norway and internationally, with overwhelmingly negative reviews; its perceived failure to meet the great expectations surrounding its release quickly became the dominant story. With some notable exceptions, the dominant view of the much anticipated film version of *The Snowman* expressed in by far the majority of the reviews is that *something went horribly wrong*. Interestingly, many, if not most, of these criticisms targeted precisely an array of different recontextualizations, phenomena that could be characterized both as translational and adaptational.

According to Linell, '[t]he dynamic coupling, and the delicate intertwining, of discourses and contexts [in recontextualization processes] can be identified at several levels' (141). The process of identifying

these layers needs to be anchored empirically in order to ensure coverage of the most relevant factors in any given object of study. Here, we have attempted to identify at least some of these levels as a starting-point for our own analyses. Agreeing fully with Dennis Cutchins that '[t]he intra- and intertextual relationships of adaptations are always more complex than even the most detailed models' (43), we nevertheless choose to propose five (fuzzy) categories that presented themselves quite clearly in the course of our scrutiny of our material, namely *medial*, *generic*, *cultural*, *ideological*, and *linguistic* recontextualization. These will allow us to pinpoint the different 'layers of transposition' at work in source-to-target processes (Sanders 25). Each of these categories will be elaborated on below.

Medial and generic recontextualization

An important and common form of recontextualization is that in which material is transposed from one medium to another: a common phenomenon here dubbed medial recontextualization. Different media have different technological and formal properties which contribute to determining the manner in which material finds expression, thus becoming individual signification systems. When material is taken from one signification system to another, changes are not only inevitable, but may also have considerable thematic consequences. In addition, whether this process of recontextualization is successful is typically a particularly prominent assessment criterion for the general public and informed reviewers alike. The medial recontextualization of Jo Nesbø's novel into a feature film is no exception here. This aspect is commented on in more or less all of the film's reviews and serves as the key feature of most of them, which is a further indication of the significance of this form of recontextualization more generally.

Nesbø's novel poses particular challenges for medial recontextualization because of its plot-driven nature, its inclusion of social commentary and interior monologue, and its extensive number of characters, red herrings, and subplots. These are all features that either have to be altered or pruned extensively to fit the filmic format. According to most of the film's reviews, the failure to successfully make these changes is the first point on the list of *what went wrong* with *The Snowman*: the filmmakers did not manage to do with the novel what David Fincher managed to do with *Girl with the Dragon Tattoo*, a very similar novel that was turned into a very similar type of film (e.g. Rambøl). In the case of *The Snowman*, the decision to cut aspects such as the inner musings of the novel's hero is generally criticized, as is the filmic representation of the 'serpentine plot machinations' of a novel such as Nesbø's (Lodge; see also e.g. Hedenstad). What is particularly significant in this context is the very focus on the process of medial recontextualization. The attention paid to the management of transpositional challenges attests to the fact that film critics and audiences are particularly attuned to observing and assessing medial recontextualization. Importantly, it also attests to the typical reception

of works such as *The Snowman as adaptations*, to borrow Hutcheon's phrase again, oscillating between source and target text as its viewers do as they analyse and assess it.

It is a commonplace observation that the reception of a work that has been recontextualized, perhaps especially from outside the scholarly community, tends to be focused on notions of fidelity and a sense of what has been lost in the process, but interestingly, this is not a sentiment echoed in the reviews of *The Snowman*. It is quite the opposite, in fact: the need for condensation is taken for granted and the willingness to accept the recontextualized work as an interesting version in its own right is notable. 'Everyone understands that you have to condense novels when you make them into films', as one critic comments, and such comments suggest a subtle shift in attitude from a traditional fidelity-based focus among the general public (Rambøl).ⁱⁱⁱ This tendency is further amplified by the fact that Tomas Alfredson's status as an innovative film auteur means that he is given much license for artistic intervention in the recontextualization process. Some of the film's reviewers even turn the traditional favouring of what came first on its head. In a description of how the film's 'competent director Tomas Alfredson, who showed his skill in *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy*, has managed to compress the 800 pages of the novel into a manageable length of a two-hour film', for instance, lies buried an implicit hierarchy where the film and its director is placed *above* the novel and its author (Johnson). This is taken even further in another review, which discusses how even when in the hands a director of former 'masterful' adaptations, the 'journey from book to film' itself can reveal and 'enhance problems in the material' of the original (Eidsvåg). The general critical consensus that the adapters have not successfully effected a medial recontextualization, then, cannot be said to have been based on traditional and largely dismissed evaluation criteria such as fidelity or subservient status to the original work.

In most reviews, in other words, *The Snowman* is perceived to fail *as an adaptation*. However, with some exceptions, it is also predominantly seen to fail *as a film*. This is seen as partly having been occasioned by a flawed recontextualization into an identifiable filmic genre. According to one critic,

for instance, it is the ‘arty take on nordic noir’ that Alfredson attempts instead of ‘remembering [the book’s] raison d’etre as a bleak thriller’ that is the underlying reason why the medial recontextualization of *The Snowman* does not work (Halligan). However, it is not only the process of recontextualization itself that is regarded as faulty in many of the reviews, but also the new medial and generic context in which the story is placed. As one film critic notes: ‘It is possible that the film will appear to be a bit better if you don’t know Harry Hole from before, but *The Snowman* will still never be a good film’ (Hedenstad). Characters and plot elements that are carefully introduced never to be seen again, internal inconsistencies, and thwarted storylines are commonly described in the immediate critical reception of the film. The difficulty of making sense of the plot, discussed by many, prompts one critic drily to ask ‘What can it all mean?’ of a film where actors appear ‘lost in the snowdrifts of the script’ as ‘sub-plots, tangents and flashbacks feel casually cobbled together, a smorgasbord where all the herrings are red and the crispbread clichés gone stale’ (Solomons). Even when it is analysed and reviewed without any interpretative oscillation between novel and film or any sense of a ‘standard’ of an original text against which it is set, *The Snowman* is regarded as an inherently flawed film.

Questions of genre, then, are integral to the medial recontextualization of *The Snowman*. The difficulty of identifying its film generic framework constitutes a common theme in the reviews, suggesting that the material has not been recontextualized to the predictable and meaning-generating sign system that a clearly recognizable genre can be said to be. The film is read against a variety of genres, such as the ‘nordic noir thriller’, the ‘logical murder mystery’ or the ‘thriller’, and is typically found to fall short of generic standards (Rambøl). In fact, some critics even jokingly introduce new generic labels in their reviews, such as ‘winter wonder-why’ (Lodge) and ‘chilly killer thriller’ (Dalton). Significantly, also those critics who do consider the film to be successful typically invoke particular generic frameworks against which the film is seen to work – and work well. In those cases, it is precisely the film’s lack of conformity to expected generic identities that are seen as central to its success: *The Snowman* is seen as ‘a film with many good qualities and a distinctiveness you rarely

find in tv crime series. It is neither a psychological drama nor an action film, but a form of chess game with human destinies' (Aune).

The *interrelatedness* of medium and genre in the production of meaning is also accentuated in the immediate critical reception of *The Snowman*. For instance, it is noted in one review that part of the problem 'is that so-called Nordic noir has become such a fixture these past few years on television, where it is well-served by an episodic structure unfolding over several weeks. Here, expecting more of the same, we find ourselves with a whole lot of story to cram into two hours and five minutes', indicative of the fact that genre conventions and medial form are inextricably linked (Halligan). It is also indicative of the significance of Nordic Noir as a meaning-generating generic backdrop against which *The Snowman* is understood. The film is generally seen to deploy a wide and widely recognisable set of genre markers of Nordic Noir. In the main, this is considered to be one of the few successful aspects of the film, but it is also commonly used for comic effect, such as when it is acerbically noted that 'maybe Alfredson and his team knew that the Nordic setting was all that separated their film from any other generic, post-Silence of the Lambs exploitation thriller. Take away all the Scandi-noir signifiers – patterned woolly jumpers, Volvos, frozen fjords, and (for fans of *The Bridge*) lots and lots of bridges – and the Snowman melts away, leaving nothing but a puddle' (Barber; see also e.g. Hedenstad and Solomons). While the novel's use of the *literary* conventions of Nordic Noir is not criticized, the equivalent filmic and televisual tropes are seen by many to border on the parodic, implying that the genre on screen may have turned stale, or at least to have reached its tipping point, suggesting that there is only so much *hygge* – or *uhygge* – a target culture can take. It also serves as yet another indication of the importance of processes of medial and generic recontextualization in the immediate critical reception of the film. Since they are so extensively and consistently deployed as assessment criteria, they also appear to be central to the understanding and reception of such work more generally.

Cultural and ideological recontextualization

The most obvious form of cultural recontextualization would involve a change in setting from one culture to another, such as in films like Gurinder Chadha's *Bride and Prejudice* (2004), Liv Ullmann's *Miss Julie* (2014) or Christopher Nolan's American remake of *Insomnia* (2002). The setting of the film version of *The Snowman* is not changed in the sense that it crosses a national or other cultural border, but arguably still effects a cultural recontextualization as the material is made to cater to an international audience with different frames of reference from the novel's original readers. The Norway of the film is not the same place as the Norway of the novel, but a Norway that is a distilment of perceptions of it from the outside that are meant to signal Norwegianness to an international audience. This altered cultural context found expression in both international and national reviews of the film. International critics made fun of the film by referring to national idiosyncrasies; there is extensive punning on red herrings and dill-pickled herrings, for instance (e.g. Lodge, Viner). Many Norwegian critics reacted negatively to the film's version of Norwegianness, not only decrying the fact that female characters failed to wear tights in the winter, but also lamenting the loss of the novel's 'cultural nuances' and 'enriching social commentary', and arguing that the awareness of 'that which is specifically Norwegian' had been 'reduced to beautiful images of famous landmarks' (Hobbelstad; Lismoen).

Cultural recontextualization may also involve the invocation of an entirely new context in the meaning-generating process, even when the actual cultural context represented remains the same. This aspect is also represented in the international reviews of *The Snowman*, such as when some of the British reviewers provided a new context for reading the image of the snowman by drawing on reference points specific, or even exclusive, to Britain. Readings of the film were based on the connotations to snowmen derived from British staples like 'the classic Raymond Briggs book and cartoon' and 'the 2012 Doctor Who Christmas Special', concluding that 'snowmen just don't look very sinister' and that the film's key signal of danger was 'more likely to elicit giggles than gasps' on that basis (Barber; see also Viner). The cultural recontextualization of the image of the snowman

thus contributed to its stated failure to elicit fear, which was a basic premise of novel and film alike. Such examples are indicative of the fact that cultural recontextualization may have thematic significance beyond mere cultural reference-spotting and shifts in the representation of relatively minor details.

An even deeper set of cultural structures and meaning potentials comes into play as culturally specific content is transferred from one culture or set of cultural references to another. This is the level of ideological frameworks for understanding, or naturalized and culturally based assumptions, that underlie our readings of texts and contribute to the situatedness of our readings. Different ranges of interpretive possibilities are activated according to dominant ideologies in various cultural contexts, and when a work is moved from one context to another, or is framed for reception by another national or international audience, this often involves ideological recontextualization, which can be seen as a subform of cultural recontextualization.

The reviews share a focus on aspects that are imbued with ideological significance. Foremost among these is the issue of gender. The very fundamentals of the plot itself were found to be troubling: 'It's hardly *The Snowman*'s fault, and it's not the worst offender, but releasing a sadistic film in which 'loose' women are nastily and almost fetishistically beheaded in the week of the Harvey Weinstein debacle could hardly be more unfortunately timed' (Halligan; see also e.g. Solomons). In addition, the very first review commented that 'The novel's portrayals of women are not impressive, but they are even worse in the film', and many others followed suit in criticizing its representation of female characters and observing that *The Snowman*'s arguably misogynist features had been amplified as it found its way to the screen (Eidsvåg; see also e.g. Robey, Hobbelstad, Lodge).

Plot alterations appear to have contributed to this effect. The changes made to the murderer's backstory as shown in the opening flashback depicting his childhood, for instance, have consequences for the implicit gender politics of the film as a whole. In Nesbø's novel, the murderer's mother has sex willingly, and her son's revulsion at her active sex life is presented as an important psychological

motivation for her murder and his consequent killing spree as an adult. In the film, however, the mother is a far more innocent entity; she is pressurized into having sex and her death lies closer to self-annihilation than actual murder. The film's reviewers comment on the opening flashback's failure to provide a convincing motivation for the film's killer's actions (e.g. Hobbelstad). 'When the killer's risible psychological motivation is finally revealed, it feels as if the screenwriters began reading Freud for Dummies, but did not even get to the end', one of them drily notes (Dalton). On the whole, the critics have very different understandings of precisely why the women victims in the film are being killed, partly due to the alterations made in the flashback detailing the origin of the murderer's motivation. If his recent victims remind him of his mother, why should he feel the need to punish them for sexual transgressions unless his mother were guilty of them too?

It is not only the murderer's mother's sexual history that is whitewashed in the film version of *The Snowman*, also the victims of his recent killing spree are represented as less 'loose' than their novelistic counterparts. Their sexual transgressions are presented as being relatively minor, atypical of who they *really* are and/or redeemed by conformity to other traditional gender traits such as self-sacrificing motherhood. A striking paradox emerges: although on the surface, the novel's conformity to the generic stock trait of violent punishment of female sexual transgression is inherently problematic from a gender political point of view, the film's eradication or alleviation of the victim's transgressions appears to have had the unexpected result of making matters worse rather than better. This is partly due to the ambiguity of the killer's presented motivation, since a credible motivation serves to locate the desire for the punishment securely in the sick or evil individual himself rather than the culture surrounding him. In addition, lessening the 'guilt' of the female victims carries with it the potential subtext that had they indeed been guilty, their punishment would somehow be appropriate.

However, the main reason for why the film is seen as 'even worse' than the novel in this respect can be found outside the remit of the actual content of either version of *The Snowman*, and has to do with the ideological recontextualization that the international film effects. Though far from all-pervasive or uncontested, the dominant gender ideology in the Nordic countries places much emphasis on gender

equality and the rights of women, including the right to unsanctioned sexual expression. This ideology, then, is taken for granted by the majority of Nordic readers of the novel and serves as a meaning-generating backdrop against which the perpetrator's actions are understood as not only deviant, but also fundamentally alien to the cultural self-understanding of sexual permissiveness for women. As the film cannot assume the same ideological underpinning from an international audience, the punishment to which these 'loose' women are subjected then becomes potentially more deserved, and consequently more general, fetishistic, and voyeuristic, in nature. The ideological recontextualization undertaken means that excuses for their behaviour and conformity to other stereotypes of femininity have to be added explicitly – they cannot be automatically provided by an audience thus ideologically inclined. Therefore, the ideological recontextualization of the *The Snowman* underlies – or at the very least contributes to – the problems connected to its gender political message as identified by Nordic and international critics alike.

Linguistic recontextualization

The critics have also noted a number of linguistic recontextualizations, which seem to construct new effects as well as co-construct, support, or even contradict the effects of the other levels of recontextualization. One issue that presents itself in this respect is that of the recontextualizations of the names of Nesbø's book, which often have linguistic, cultural, *and* ideological repercussions. One example is the name of Harry's ex-partner, Rakel. Like most of the other names in (the translated book and) the film, it has been left untranslated, which is expected in light of the currently strong norm for the translation of novels for adults in general. The medial transposition from book to film, however, entails that the merely *imagined* pronunciation of those names when reading the book, becomes *actual* pronunciation in the film, which adds interesting facets to the transformation that these elements undergo when recontextualized. The name Rakel is pronounced /rɑ:kəl/ in Norwegian. Religious in origin, the name retains, in the Norwegian source culture, associations of simplicity, piety, and sexual restraint. In the English-language film, however, the name is pronounced 'Raquel', a clear allusion to the glamorous film actress Raquel Welch – the polar opposite, in other words, of a Norwegian Rakel. The creation of this association adds a facet to the way women are represented in the source text versus in the film. While we saw that the killer's female victims' sexualities were downplayed in the film, the pronunciation of Rakel's name – together with the way the filmmakers have decided to dress her, in slinky dress and no tights – actually take her sexuality up a notch, so that in sum, the women in the film all seem to be relegated to some kind of unobtrusive middle position – always sexy, but not too sexy.

The main character, Harry Hole, sports a fairly common Norwegian name, which, as one of the Anglophone reviewers of *The Snowman* more or less correctly points out, 'technically,' is 'pronounced ho-leh' (Solomons). Other non-Norwegian commentators have not hit the nail on the head with equal precision, for example Barry Forshaw, in his *Guide to Scandinavian Crime Fiction*, who proposes that Hole be pronounced 'Hurler' (105). Nesbø was possibly well aware of what he was doing when choosing especially the last name of his character, anticipating possibilities for language

play within his own novels (in the first Harry Hole novel, *Flaggermusmannen* (1997) (*The Bat* (2012)), an Australian policeman calls the detective *Harry Holy*); as well as possibilities for a wide variety of interpretations and depictions of the name both among the largely highly English-proficient readers of the novel in Norwegian, and among future English-language translators and adapters of the novel. As far as *The Snowman* is concerned, one Anglophone critic observes, ‘although there was an obvious effort to give the characters’ names their correct Norwegian pronunciation (“Aasen” is pronounced “Oh-sen,” for example), that effort at authenticity didn’t extend to the name of Harry Hole’ (Allen). In the film, Harry’s last name is pronounced in a distinctly English fashion. Sometimes such adjustments have purely phonetic consequences, such as in the case of the British adaptation of Wallander, where ‘The alienated detective’s name was now pronounced (for the benefit of the language-challenged British and Americans who could not have coped) with a ‘W’ rather than a fricative ‘V’, with the stress now comfortably on the first syllable rather than the second’ (Forshaw 9). Other times, however, such changes have semantic consequences. In the film *The Snowman*, Hole is pronounced as a homophone of the words *hole* and *whole*, which, like in the case of *Harry Holy* mentioned above, adds a descriptive dimension to the name, one that moves the interpretation of Harry Hole’s character in a specific direction. One critic notes, with reference to the lacklustre performance of the actor depicting Harry in *The Snowman*: ‘Ironically for a character named Hole, he is the hole in the centre of the film’ (Barber).

Other names also undergo highly charged transformations from book to film. Harry’s police colleague Katrine Bratt’s last name is, in English pronunciation, infused with a different descriptive meaning than the original Norwegian name; while Bratt in Norwegian literally means *steep*, *brat* in English means *naughty child*, which might contribute to constructing a view of a driven, but ultimately not-to-be-taken-that-seriously female newbie on the team whose visual cuteness is perhaps to be regarded as her most important asset. Finally, ‘seedy industrialist’ Arve Støp (pronounced, in Norwegian, with the long vowel /ø:/), for a long time the suspected killer in both book and film, becomes, in the act of avoiding that disturbing Norwegian letter ø, Arve Stop, which has obvious semantic charge (although exactly which interpretations this might inspire in the viewer, remains unclear) (Lambie).

Many critics have commented on the clash between the Norwegian setting and the fact that the film plays out in the English language. Some of the Norwegian reviewers are critical towards this choice: ‘To begin with, it made me dizzy to find such close environments populated by English-speaking actors’ (Lismoen). Critics of *The Snowman* also react to translations of various written texts in the shots. One sarcastically points out that it is ‘pure genius to have Oslo Police Station and all the trams have signpostings in English, and having the national newspaper be called “Norway Review”’ (Gabrielsen). Anglophone reviewers too react to the uniform linguistic transposition: ‘Everything was wrong, starting with the fact that although the English-language *Snowman* was set in Norway, most of the characters spoke their lines with inexplicable British accents, as though London, not Oslo, were the setting (I kept waiting for Big Ben to chime from St. Olav’s Cathedral, a backdrop of one of the scenes) (Allen). By contrast, English audiences of the British adaptation of the Swedish *Wallander* crime series were seen to have ‘no problems with a largely English cast, speaking English but set down in a genuine Swedish milieu’ (Forshaw 9). In fact, they generally seemed to enjoy the foreign setting, finding it charming. These differences in reception may be due to an interplay of recontextualization choices where the fact that one or several of them, in the case of *The Snowman*, were deemed to be unsuccessful, also threw a negative light on the others. Some critics in fact saw it necessary to criticise other critics’ attitudes to this particular aspect of the film, reminding them of the premise of suspension of disbelief – the importance of upholding their part of this contract, which will allow them to actually enjoy the story that is being told (Rakvaag).

The clash between the setting and the language used is a classic case of cultural recontextualization interlocking with linguistic recontextualization, and it ties in with the observation made in the previous section – that the Norway in the film is not the Norway in the novel. It is because the Norway of the original novel is, obviously, a Norway in which Norwegians speak Norwegian. Having said that, this culturo-linguistic unity is shattered already in the English book translation (as it is in any translation of a novel where the setting is kept and the language is changed), and there are also

currently numerous examples of this form of unrealism in popular film – any setting, even different planets, can be English- speaking nowadays – something which should by now have conditioned the audience rather thoroughly to this particular filmic choice. The fact that critics nevertheless react negatively could be, in the case of the Norwegian reviewers, because of a language ideology to the effect that we must not allow Norwegian, a language with approximately 5 million speakers, to become submerged by English. It could, however, instead, simply be because Norwegians are not yet quite used to this kind of attention to and reworking of their cultural products for the purpose of reaching a global audience: it is not commonplace, and thus a sense of alienation arises. In the case of the Anglophone reviewers, the reason for the negative reactions could be that international fans of Nordic Noir just cannot get close enough to ‘the Nordic’ and will therefore be automatically critical of any attempt at watering it out.

One single shot at linguistic authenticity (if this is indeed what it is) stands out among the uniformly and predominantly British-accented universe of the film, namely the American actor J.K. Simmons’ putting on what one reviewer somewhat sarcastically described as ‘a sinister Nordic accent’ (Solomons). This form of linguistic recontextualization, one that doubles back on itself (the message in Norwegian is re-created in an English-language context, only to be re-inserted into some other kind of Norwegian context), seems to work alongside the other culturally-specific signifiers, i.e. the woolly jumpers and the frozen fjords, to produce a stereotypical image of a Norway that may well strongly evoke the Nordic Noir genre, but also, insofar as the film is otherwise not regarded as very good, also give rise to ridicule.

Final remarks

In this article we have outlined an integrated framework based on Linell's notion of recontextualization as a theoretical node connecting the prototypical understandings of 'adaptation' and 'translation', respectively. Our proposed five levels of recontextualization – medial, generic, cultural, ideological, and linguistic – may well be central to all typical multisemiotic transfers/transformations – but, as we pointed out at the beginning, they will probably be *more or less* relevant in any given case, meaning that not all of them need be used in every case. One might also imagine collapsing them (merging, for example, cultural and ideological), adding subcategories (for linguistic recontextualization, distinguishing, for example, between formal (phonological, morphosyntactic), and semantic recontextualizations), or adding new categories as needed. These choices will have to be guided by the goal of the research and by the given case one is looking at.

With respect to *The Snowman*, the case we presented to illustrate how the framework could work in practice, we saw that the reviewers were not convinced by the way in which different recontextualization processes had been handled in the trajectory from book to film. The general sentiment is perhaps best summed up in the acidic words of this Norwegian critic: 'This is how all films ought to be like: depicting a world where all men wear eye-liner [alluding to a heavily made-up Val Kilmer as Bergensian ex-cop Gert Rafto], where indoor smoking is common, all Norwegians speak to each other in English, and no-one can pronounce their own name' (Allen). The clashes are obvious: a rock star in Nordic Noir, a genre-convention connoting unhealth deployed on the brink of a health-conscious 2017, as well as the previously discussed collision between setting and speech. We hope to have shown, in this article, precisely how the different levels of recontextualization interact and interlock in order to produce meaning in their new contexts, no matter how (un-)successful these interactions and interlockings might be in terms of their effects vis-à-vis viewers. In particular, we hope to have shown how important it is to analyse elements that have traditionally been of concern to adaptation studies scholars together with elements that have been of concern to translation studies

scholars: all these elements work in unison, sometimes in harmony and sometimes not, but separating them inevitably means creating an artificial boundary and losing out of the fuller picture.

We should point out that even though our goal has been to argue for a marriage of adaptation and translation analysis in cases where both are obviously at play, given the fundamental status of recontextualization as a basic principle of communication, we believe that a ‘recontextualization approach’ could be used as an analytical entrance also to communicative forms that do *not* involve thematization of the fact that they are recontextualization. In other words, such a framework could be used to analyse, for example, discourse in general, or ‘original’ literary texts, or films that are not regarded as adaptations. Similarly, it could be used to analyse intra- or intersemiotic transfers that do not involve language or the filmic medium, such as ‘translating’ a painting into a piece of music. This would allow interesting comparisons of the nature of recontextualization phenomena across communicative forms.

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i It might be pertinent to point out that Linell’s understanding of ‘context’ consists in the idea of the existence of a set of physical and cognitive contextual resources (e.g. prior discourse/co-text, the concrete, immediate situation, participants’ background assumptions/knowledge, etc.) (128-131), which participants draw on selectively in their acts of interpretation (137).

ii It is important to point out that for (prototypical) translation practices, it is not always the case that the fact that something is a translation is *strongly* thematized, cf. Nord’s ‘instrumental translations’, meaning translations where the fact that something is a translation does not carry significance in a given context, and therefore this fact is not highlighted. However, even in these cases it will generally always be known to *someone* that a special relationship between a source and a target exists, if only to the translator him or herself.

iii This, and all subsequent translations from Scandinavian languages, are ours.