

Nataša Govedić, *Stil za stil: živa rampa adapt-autorstva*. Zagreb: Hrvatski Centre ITI, 2021.

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Style for Style: Life on the Proscenium Line of Adapt-authorship (Hrvatski centar ITI, 2021), written by Nataša Govedić (a theatrologist, theatre critic, activist, writer, independent scientist and lecturer at the Centre for Women's Studies, Centre for Peace Studies and the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in Zagreb), is an elaborate study in the theory and practice of artistic adaptation and authorship. Interested in the adaptational process both in general and in finer details, Govedić's book strives to draw attention to the complexity of metaphorical thinking, something she identifies as a foundation that enables one style of artistic expression to be interchanged for another. According to the Croatian filmologist Hrvoje Turković, as much as it is original research in the fields of adaptation studies, theatre studies and filmology, *Style for Style* could also be considered something of a handbook for playwrights, screenwriters and scriptwriters, focusing on the complexity of dramatic creation across different visual media: theatre, film, TV series, and comic books.

The question that occupies Govedić's research in a broader sense, pertaining to both adaptation and theatre studies, is the principal focus of the creative practice she identifies as "adapt-authorship": how do we manage metaphors and metaphorical thinking in order to generate art? Nataša Govedić explicitly treats artistic expression as language, where the clarity of enunciation and affective articulation of subjectivity leads to expressive artistic originality. The adapt-authorial endeavour is an unmistakable exercise in originality, and it is an activity that Govedić (ever the theatre person) perceives as an act of perpetually residing at the proscenium line of creation, actively balancing between what was and what will be, while never fully crossing this imaginary line to either side. Artistic work born from adapt-authorship should be acknowledged as an assembly, a conference, or a great meeting point of various influences, keeping its translational

originality, which makes its adapt-authorial descendants intentionally different. Unlike in actual translation, but quite like when it comes to the concept of metaphor, the creative point of adapt-authorship is to create something possibly very different with the help of that which is recognized as similar. The adapt-authorial act of “translating” one author’s style into another is, therefore, an active exchange on the proscenium line of creation where we articulate and discuss our intimacy and personal viewpoints with the assistance of others. For Govedić, adapt-authorship is, essentially, the art of innovating and generating unexpected relationships between conceptual domains.

Written in a professionally and scientifically adept manner, the book also manages to keep a light and somewhat conversational tone, engaging the reader in a way which makes even the most discussed and well-known theoretical frameworks seem fresh and intriguing. The foundation for Govedić’s book is quite solid. She builds her own theoretical insight on cues from Paul Ricoeur, George Lakoff, Maria Calzeda-Pérez, Michael Taussig, Michel Foucault, Linda Hutcheon, Thomas Leitch, Roland Barthes and Gérard Genette, who function as an extraordinary supporting cast of this endeavour. What is particularly interesting in the composition of *Style for Style* is the organisation of its chapters. True to her perception of adapt-authorship through a linguistic lens, Nataša Govedić offers chapters in a sequence of grammatical cases, all of which are indispensable in the adapt-authorial process. Most of them are the standard seven grammatical cases well-known to the Croatian language. However, for the sake of better articulation of the adapt-authorship phenomenon, Govedić creates a couple more. She throws in a second accusative case, followed by a luditive case, while later on, she adds the category *time* in addition to *space* in the form of a temporative case, and then completes the grammar of adapt-authorship with an imaginative case. This extensive list of eleven cases might appear dull and dreary even to a hard-core grammar book aficionado, but it is, in fact, far from it. Quite the contrary, it is possibly one of the liveliest grammars you will ever read.

As for the main cast of this book, in order to articulate the process of adapt-authorship and explore its features, Nataša Govedić provides interesting examples of adapt-authorship from contemporary visual art, popular culture, and classical drama and literature. The effortless analysis of authorial signatures of the likes of David Lynch, Quentin Tarantino, Alfred Hitchcock, Gus van Sant, Agnès Varda, Lynne Ramsay and Hayao Miyazaki, contemplating the structure of the Marvel Cinematic Universe and TV series like *Breaking Bad*, reflecting on the creative authorship of artists such as Rade Šerbedžija or Frances McDormand, combined with a rich and fluent vocal exchange of insight

with authors such as Plato, Shakespeare, Euripides, Chekhov, Genet, Beckett, Derrida, Kravar, Geertz, and Pristaš, to name only a few, provide Govedić's arguments with a wide range of interesting and contemporary examples of both national and international significance, and point out a never-ending dialogue between high and popular culture, which proves to be a great strength of this book. In addition to her insightful and engaging analyses, Govedić offers a list of "work questions" to conclude each chapter, thus creating a possibility of further engaging its audience. The additional questions cleverly make *Style for Style* not only a theoretical, but also a practical addition to visual media, theatre and adaptation studies, and the phenomenon of adapt-authorship.

Nataša Govedić is a firm believer in artistic dialogue, therefore, her book on adapt-authorship consults a congregation of distinctive and clear authorial voices. The necessity of collaboration is what she identifies as the nominative of adapt-authorship, where the first person is always in the plural, and the content exchange is often communal and anonymous in nature, something Govedić accepts as an endless accumulation of knowledge and experience in creative tendencies. The genitive case of adapt-authorship is precisely this: a dialogue-generator between markedly heterogeneous communication domains. Govedić perceives adaptation as the primary creative methodology, seeing as it enables us to recognize and consider the context of our own work in progress, and this kind of dialogic interaction breeds innovation. The adapt-authorial genitive is especially important because it opens the creative process to communication, generating awareness and acceptance of a story's mythical configurations, historical dimensions of the voices we mediate between, negotiate with or often contradict, and the perpetual incompleteness of artistic work.

The chapter on the dative case explores the question of how to capitalise on the mutual pervasiveness of different media in adapt-authorship and how to use it for personal artistic representation. A big part of this is what Govedić dubs "the Shakespearean theorem" – the intentional hybridization of expressive domains, which she deems a basic modality of contemporary adapt-authorship, involving an entire spectrum of media. Govedić states that hybridization is a form of erudition, and the sooner one accepts its omnipresence, the better for their artistic endeavours (she offers an interesting comparison of Tarantino and Godard). The first accusative of adapt-authorship is all about style, a seminal part of what makes art recognizable. Govedić highlights the openness and clarity of a strong artistic style, which harbours the potential for stylistic (and therefore, formal) transformation. Adapt-authorship thrives on the inviting clarity of another's

artistic style because it demands its radical re-evaluation in a new style. For Govedić, this is like jazz: one knows a style so well they can intervene and make their own conceptual variations. Govedić's second accusative emphasizes the importance of a fictional character's entire disposition probing into relevant ethical and philosophical problems in order to get strong and far-reaching reception. The luditive rightfully takes the central spot in the book, as it is the case of playfulness and play, prerequisites of adapt-authorial creativity. The chapter on the locative considers adapt-authorial space, pondering how one work envelops another, and showing how even a most faithful remake provides a new relationship to the space of what we perceive as the classic or the original. Adapt-authorship, therefore, engages in the rhetoric of artistic space, as shown in the example of Van Sant's *Psycho*. In the case of the temporative, adapt-authorship intervenes in chronology and history, imaginatively manipulating the time dimension, as is the case with Marvel Studios. The vocative is an interesting case of live-action adapt-authorship, while the instrumental is all about the exchange of what is personal as a tool of adapt-authorship, which implies an intimate, stylistic exchange. Finally, the imaginative case exposes imagination as a cognitive experiment and the main reason for any adapt-authorial process.

For some, Govedić's conversational delivery might seem somewhat too subjective and casual from a scientific discourse perspective; however, these stylistic choices also neatly reflect the book's main point, pertaining to the adapt-authorial articulation of subjectivity through negotiation and dialogue with other (subjective) voices. If there is one thing Govedić's book achieves, it is the clarity of her (adapt-)authorial voice. This voice is, in fact, so clear it inspires the urge to articulate a reply and explore her arguments through practice. What more could an author hope for?