Re-visiting and Re-staging

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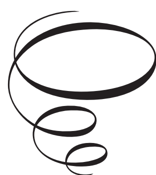
By

Anupam Vatsyayan

Cambridge Scholars Publishing



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This book first published 2016

Cambridge Scholars Publishing

Lady Stephenson Library, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE6 2PA, UK

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

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ISBN (10): 1-4438-9434-6
ISBN (13): 978-1-4438-9434-0

In honour of
Mamma & Papa
and
Maa & Papa

For making me and supporting me all the way

And

to

My husband, Vaivasvat Venkat …
You mean the world to me

We shall not cease from exploration
and the end of all our exploring will be
to arrive where we started ...
and know the place for the first time.

—T. S. Eliot

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Gary David Goldberg points out, “It takes a lot of people to make a winning team. Everybody's contribution is important.” This book is also the result of the cumulative efforts of a group of individuals. Their contributions to my research and findings are unparalleled and much cherished.

First and foremost, I express my gratitude to Professor Manju Jaidka, my mentor, for her sagacious guidance and constructive criticism at every step of this venture. Her priceless and opportune remarks and observations brought me closer to my dream.

I am also deeply indebted to Professor Anil Raina and Professor Rana Nayyar for their critical suggestions and thoughtful feedback.

My gratitude is also due to Professor (Dr.) Mahendra Kumar for his remarkable insights into the world of theatre. His informed comments and ideas helped me to understand the relationship between drama and theatre and the physical journey from one to the other.

Moreover, I am extremely beholden to Neelam Man Singh Chowdhry for her ready approval for personal interviews. Her unconditional support and faith in the project gave an impetus to my study. It was, indeed, a pleasurable experience talking to the maestro in the arresting confines of her artistic house.

Further, I am immensely grateful to Professor Kumara Varma for taking time out from his packed schedule for a series of interviews. During the initial stages of my research, he graciously introduced me to his work place and work mode in the Department of Indian Theatre, and it was a delight to converse with him in the backdrop of theatre equipment.

I am much obliged to Anjala Maharishi for her immediate consent for e-interviews. When I began my research, Maharishi had shifted base to New Delhi, and the instant she learnt about the project, she lent me her absolute co-operation.

Needless to say, their views, ideas, and observations formulate the backbone of my study.

Furthermore, I extend my gratitude to the Department of English and Cultural Studies, and the Department of Indian Theatre, Panjab University, Chandigarh, for their unceasing supply of material, ranging from scripts of

various plays, photographs, and other forms of documentation, during the process of my research.

Before signing off, I place on record the gratitude I feel towards my family for their unflinching faith in me and their unconditional support in whatever I do.

FOREWORD

I am delighted to write the foreword for this book by Anupam N. Vatsyayan. It is an outstanding study of the written text in actual performance, of story patterns as they traverse spatial borders, and the changes that narratives undergo in the process. Anyone who passes through the field of storytelling would be familiar with the fact that stories found across the world follow a set template, and new stories are simply manufactured from the existing moulds. Ideas, concepts, plotlines, and even episodes are repeated in all forms of fiction and dramatic narratives. The study of adaptations, appropriations, and re-visitations of old tales can be interesting and illuminating. This book is a laudable piece of research that answers numerous queries regarding the circulation and repetition of stories in general, and adaptations in particular. The theory of adaptation, along with its need and appeal, is discussed here in a meticulous way. The book also tracks the origin and prevalence of re-visitations right up to their reception.

And there is much more: the intermediary chapters, which are basically case studies, underline the worth of this book in the arena of cultural and cross-cultural research work. The various aspects of cultural transformation of a text are dealt with. How is a text torn from its context and reinstated in an entirely different milieu? How does the adapter perceive the possibilities hidden in the story? What is the take of the director? Does the audience play any role in such a transaction? These questions have been investigated in detail as part of each case study.

The transcribed interviews of the three theatre directors under scrutiny, primarily responsible for the book's accuracy and genuineness, constitute the most valuable factor. Furthermore, the merger of physical theatre with literature is very stimulating. The physical stage, with its demands and limitations, is the ultimate reality of any written or unwritten play text. In this respect, the book gives double delight to the reader. Various texts are compared and, on one hand, the differences in various editions and adaptations are brought to the forefront, while on the other different performances are analysed, keeping in view the budget, the quality of actors, and the perspective of the director. In addition, some of the movie adaptations have also been examined. Interestingly, the stills from theatre and movie productions have been provided, creating easy reference points

for the reader. At the same time, they demonstrate as well as validate the analysis of the author.

Students and scholars of literature and theatre will certainly benefit from this book. All three texts selected by the author (*Pygmalion*, *Yerma*, and *The Visit of the Old Lady*) have been scrutinised from all possible angles, ranging from the context to the characters. The viewpoints of the playwrights, adapters, and directors are also considered, offering deep insights into the world of creativity. This work is indeed worthy of becoming a consolidated source of information for comparative adaptation studies.

Manju Jaidka
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PREFACE

It is said that the number of basic human emotions and passions is limited, but at the same time the variety of situations, from which they originate, is infinite (Boulton 66). This "variety" can be ascribed to the diversity of social structures found in the world. Every geographical locale has its unique structure deeply rooted in its customs, manners, and political attitude, as well as position. Therefore, every time a text travels, it acquires a new flavour. It adapts itself to the needs of the audience as perceived by the director, thereby providing a new version of the old "story." This argument can be further developed by referring to J. M. Coetzee's Nobel lecture, in which he states that there are just a "handful of stories in the world." These are worked and reworked repeatedly, thus presenting us with new perspectives and possibilities of treatment. This also affirms Walter Benjamin's insight that "storytelling is always the art of repeating stories" ("The Task of the Translator" 90).

In the past few decades, a lot of exhilaration, furore, and curiosity has been generated around this idea of adaptation. In endless debates and the bringing -together -of -heads, efforts have been made to unravel the mystery shrouding the topic of adaptation. A lot of labour has gone into finding suitable replies to the "whats," "whys," and "hows" of this topic. Numerous books and a great deal of research have deliberated upon the subject. This book is another step in evaluating the retelling of stories in varied times and locales. It ought to be added, though, that the case studies included in this book have been used in a tripartite perspective and relevance, as this is a cultural, inter-disciplinary and comparative study. I strongly believe that these three pillars have immense contemporary value and will surely be of interest and use to scholars and researchers.

Furthermore, this book attempts to examine the process of adaptation while concentrating upon the adaptation of Western plays in the Indian context. The three "source" texts which are under scrutiny are George Bernard Shaw's *Pygmalion*, Federico Garcia Lorca's *Yerma*, and Friedrich Dürrenmatt's play *The Visit of the Old Lady*. Even though the medium of presentation remains the same, the stage, the stories are transmuted to fit new times and different places. In this comparative study, I endeavour to illustrate that an adaptation does not kill the "original" or the "source" work, but instead keeps it alive in an "after-life". At the same time, an

adaptation is not paler than nor secondary to the source work by any standard of comparison. This book further explicates how stories evolve by means of cultural selection, travelling from one place to another, and yet remain recognisable.

1. INTRODUCTION

> The dramatic form encourages persistent reworking and imagining. Performance is an inherently adaptive art...
>
> —Julie Sanders, *Adaptation and Appropriation*

Roland Barthes emphasises that a literary piece should not be referred to as a "work" but a "text," which is beneficial in highlighting its inherent plurality because, for him, a "text" is a plural "stereophony of echoes, citations, references" (160). A text is influenced by a number of other texts. No single work is groundbreaking; it is the variations in the work which make it appear experimental. A literary text cannot be studied in isolation. It is a product of multiple influences and counter-influences. The postcolonial concept of "hybridity" can be linked with this intertextual impulse manifested in the interspersing of various texts. Homi Bhabha defends "hybridity" and emphasises that ideas are "repeated, relocated and translated in the name of tradition" (207). However, he draws a line between hybridity that pronounces essential differences among various cultures and hybridity that results in absolute cultural synthesis. Bhabha declares that where the former enables innovation, the latter proves stifling. This is particularly true in the case of postcolonial cultures where the imperial tradition tends to dominate or suppress the indigenous in a hybridised form. Therefore, hybridisation is justified and advantageous only if it can stimulate fresh utterances and creativity. In the literary field, a study of dominant and suppressed factors also becomes a crucial consideration in any intertextual relationship.

Here, it would be relevant to refer to Aristotle's theory of mimesis, or imitation. Aristotle saw imitation as a part of instinctive human behaviour which, in turn, serves as one of the sources of the pleasure derived from art. From childhood, humans learn by example. Simulation is not only responsible for active learning but also provides sweet pleasure in the fact that one is able to perform the same as the elders/ betters/ more-privileged. It has been argued that, unlike the common belief, canonical works were imitated for more reasons than capitalising on their prestige and authority alone. Imitation, in a more literary sense, is a form of creative process.

Creativity lies in making the adapted text one's own. However, this is not the same thing as plagiarism or idle copying. Plagiarism is not the announced appropriation of a previously established text, whereas adaptation, as a rule, is an acknowledged revisiting of prior work(s). Therefore, the "new" work is an autonomous entity born out of repetition without replication.

Adapting a piece of work is just one of the numerous ways of "recreating" a "source-text," others being the formation of sequels, prequels, preludes, counter or parallel-narratives, and other revisionist texts that pay tribute to the original work. Parallel-narratives include a vast array of works ranging from *Chandrabati Ramayana* to J. M. Coetzee's reworking of *Robinson Crusoe* in *Foe*. *Chandrabati Ramayana* is "the Rama-story retold by a Bengali Hindu village woman, a woman who had known suffering," and "who had the courage to choose the lonely intellectual life of a poet, in sixteenth century rural East Bengal" (Sen 170). It is primarily a tale devoted to Sita and her supernatural birth, childhood, marriage, pregnancy, exile, and humiliation; contrary to common practice, Rama is "hardly visible except in relation in Sita" (Ibid, 171). Coetzee's *Foe* provides a female perspective that is entirely absent in the source work. It narrates the story of a Susan Barton who, in search of her kidnapped daughter, finds herself ashore on the island where Cruso and Friday live a life of newly acquired complacency. The novel tells the story of Barton's adventures with them on the island, their journey back, and her relation with Daniel Foe, a novelist.

A work that deserves special mention is the play titled *Lear's Daughters*. This devised play[1] forms a prelude, "a beginning to Shakespeare's play," with its focus on the three daughters rather than the father (Fuchs 190). It is a keen metatheatrical study of their psychology, childhood, and power struggle. In this manner, the play asserts a relationship and association with an already existing play, i.e. *King Lear* and substantially deviates from the original plot to create a new piece with fresh points of view, focal points and perspectives. In drama, the "textual origin" can also be referred to by using excerpts from the source work or by introducing an inner play bound up with the outer or frame play, a method much followed by Tom Stoppard (Boireau 137). But, again, these

[1] A devised play does not have a concrete script by one writer or even writers. The actors, while performing, improvise the plot and the action along the way. Hence, the title "devised". No written script exists or is followed. According to Wikipedia "Devised theatre is a form of theatre where the script originates not by a writer or writers, but from collaborative, usually improvisatory, work by a group of people (usually, but not necessarily, the performers)."

revisionist texts differ widely from adaptations. Their brief allusions to other work(s) do not qualify as extended engagements. These texts attempt to recontextualise only small fragments of other work which is not the case in adaptations. Another method of recreating a text is to write a sequel or, for that matter, even a prequel. Not surprisingly, these are found in abundance in the market but are not even remotely related to adaptations. Marjorie Garber says that the reason behind the mass production of sequels and prequels is the desire for not wanting to ever end a story (73-4). Adaptations, on the other hand, can be simplified as wanting to tell the same story again and again in many different ways.

Simple translation is also one of the techniques adopted to work on a text. Miles Malleson successfully translated Molière for the British stage and so did Henry Fielding (Boulton 67). Christopher Fry's translations of Giraudoux are very popular. Translations undoubtedly allow ideas to travel across the globe, but the characters born in a particular culture with a different cultural history remain remote for a later audience. To overcome this hazard, a piece of art is given local flavour so as to enable the "new" audience to identify with the characters and understand their emotions and situations in the realm of their own experience.

Linda Hutcheon, in *A Theory of Adaptation*, gives a continuum of relationships between prior works and their later revisitations (171). On one end of the continuum are literary translations which aim at delivering an authentic translation of the given work by capturing the finer nuances and cultural details of the text and re-producing them in a new language. Nevertheless, in literal translations, fidelity to the prior work is reduced to a mere theoretical ideal than a practical possibility. Many words and ideas that have seeped into a particular culture fail to produce apposite counterparts in the language of translation. It would be interesting to mention here that there are no less than 17 words available for "stench" in Kumaoni, a North-eastern Indian language, in which every kind of odour is assigned a different word. The stench of a damp towel is differentiated from that of a dirty washroom in this regional tongue. "Certain words are non-translatable," says Neelam Man Singh Chowdhry. She elaborates that language is not just words but a combination and consequence of myth, cultural history and imagery. Translation, therefore, can be termed as a facilitating device and it is the responsibility of the editor to distinguish a good translation from a variety of choices available. The objective of translation is not to "recreate" but to "reproduce" a literary work.

In Hutcheon's continuum, translation is followed by forms like condensations and censorings. The term "censoring" implies that the changes are deliberate and restrictive in nature. Next along the continuum

is the realm of adaptation proper, which includes the "reinterpretation" and "recreation" of familiar tales. According to Hutcheon, parodies are also included in this category in the form of ironic adaptations because of their overt relationship to a prior text. At the far end of this continuum, she places a whole series of, what she calls, "spin-offs" (171). This is the space of sequels and prequels, as well as, works which offer critical commentary on some prior work. The continuum not only shows the relation between a text and its later revisitation but also helps us to understand what adaptation is not.

Contrarily, in *Adaptation and Appropriation*, Julie Sanders provides a galaxy of terms that show that adaptation overlaps and is almost synonymous with other forms of recreation that have been so neatly compartmentalised by Hutcheon in her continuum:

> The vocabulary of adaptation is highly labile: Adrian Poole has offered an extensive list of terms to represent the Victorian era's interest in reworking the artistic past: ... borrowing, stealing, appropriating, inheriting, assimilating ... being influenced, inspired, dependent, indebted, haunted, possessed ... homage, mimicry, travesty, echo, allusion, and intertextuality ... We could continue the linguistic riff, adding into the mix: variation, version, interpretation, imitation, proximation, supplement, increment, improvisation, prequel, sequel, continuation, addition, paratext, hypertext, palimpsest, graft, rewriting, reworking, refashioning, revision, re-evaluation. (3)

Sanders opines that all the above-mentioned categories engage in the process of intertextuality, albeit in varied degrees and are, consequently, considered as some form or another of adaptation. Adaptation, according to her, is a rich idiom and related to the parallel disciplines of music and fine art, which, apparently, accounts for most of the terms in the list given above.

Adaptation

The literal meaning of "adapt" is "to adjust" or "to make suitable". To study adaptation as a literary theory requires an understanding of the "double vision" of adaptation (Hutcheon 15). Adaptation is the term used for the product as well as the process. As a product, it refers to the formal entity that is an announced and overt transcoding of a particular work. As a process, it points towards creating a new and independent work by reinterpreting another's story and filtering it according to one's own sensibilities. This is, in fact, also one of the appeals of adaptation. It is a fine mixture of repetition and difference, of familiarity and novelty – there

is repetition, but not mindless copying. Like a ritual, this sort of repetition brings comfort, understanding, and confidence. The audience or the reader is able to derive a fuller understanding of the story by approaching it from a fresh perspective in an adaptation; and encountering a familiar tale also escalates their confidence because of the prior knowledge as to what is going to come next. Therefore, an adaptation blends the comfort of ritual and recognition with the delight of surprise and innovation. The "double nature" of adaptation involves memory along with change, and persistence along with variation.

Since adaptations are deliberate and acknowledged revisitations of prior work(s), their fidelity to the source work is not the criterion for judging their merits. Thus, the debate of faithfulness to the source text becomes irrelevant. Furthermore, this debate becomes totally redundant when the source work is experienced after the adaptation. In the fidelity issue, adaptations differ significantly from translations. In general concepts of translation, the relationship between the source text and its translation is that of faithfulness and proximity. In contrast, the success of adaptations depends upon and is measured in terms of the creativity and skill with which it is given an autonomous status, rather than its fidelity to the source text. Fidelity criticism also grants primacy and authority to the source text and implies that adapters merely reproduce works. This argument is weakened by the fact that adapters do not simply reproduce – they reinterpret and newly relate popular stories from different perspectives. Adaptations, just because they come second, are not inferior or secondary to the source work.

Michael Alexander, a Scottish poet, appropriately describes adaptations as "palimpsestuous" works, which are always haunted by and examined in relation to their adapted texts (Hutcheon 6). Their relationship to other work/works is overt and announced. This also explains why adaptation studies are predominantly comparative. The adaptation is critically compared with the source work in terms of the areas which have been magnified, underplayed, modified, added to, or even completely deleted. Such comparative studies involve a minute inspection of the method adopted by the adapter, their ideology, and the techniques used in the process of adaptation. Also, the transcoding of a particular text involves a shift in its medium, genre, frame, and/or context which demands attention and a detailed examination.

Gerard Genette, while commenting on the palimpsestuous nature of texts, gives two terms that are indispensable for understanding the relationship between the source text and the palimpsest: "Any text is a *hypertext*, grafting itself onto a *hypotext*, an earlier text that it imitates or

transforms" (in Sanders 12, emphasis added). It implies that every text is a hypertext as well as a hypotext, that is, it is the literary "off spring" of a previous text and, in turn, is also a literary antecedent that inspires other texts, therefore, underscoring that adaptation is a continuous and on going process.

The whole exercise in adaptation has a vast scope for inter-media and inter-generic play. Drama itself is adapted in many different ways. Film adaptations, animations of classics for the benefit of younger audiences, radio plays, and television screenings are not uncommon. Shakespeare remains a favourite even today, with screen versions of almost all the major plays in Hollywood as well as adaptations like *Angoor* (*The Comedy of Errors*), *Maqbool* (*Macbeth*), *Omkara* (*Othello*), and *Haider* (*Hamlet*) in Indian cinema. In addition, his themes have been sources of inspiration for many screenplays. The dramatization of novels and short stories for the purpose of stage productions and films is a frequent phenomenon, but is to be carried out with great care in order to conform to the needs of the stage. Irrespective of the pressures and demands of procedure, dramatization is a regular practice that has given us a priceless collection of plays. Writers like Anne Radcliffe, Jane Austen, and W. Somerset Maugham have been successfully adapted to various forms of media available in the twentieth century. Rick Altman goes to the extent of saying that, "The last half of the nineteenth century and the first quarter of the twentieth century was so fertile in theatrical adaptations that it is not safe to bet against the existence of any adaptation of any novel, however unlikely" (in Garcha, "Classical Hollywood Cinema").

Furthermore, films are themselves open to "novelisation" in the twenty-first century. Once in a while, we come across a novel that is based on a film. These ventures are undertaken with the principal motive of capitalising on successful movies, like the novel versions of the popular *Star Wars* series; but in such cases, the probability of the loss of artistic control on the part of the author is higher as thay have to work within the confines of an already structured story. Needless to say, there are exceptions to the rule when a "novelisation" not only complements the film on which it is based but also stands as an independent work of quality and conviction. Filmmaker Deepa Mehta based her 1998 film *Earth 1947* on *Cracking India* (1991), a book written by Bapsi Sidhwa and originally published as *Ice Candy Man* in England in 1988. When Deepa Mehta's *Water* (2005) released, Bapsi Sidhwa wrote a novel based on Mehta's script which was published with the same title in 2006.

Inter-generic adaptation includes the reworking of classical plays into closet plays or musicals, novels into poems and epics into novels. George

Bernard Shaw's *Pygmalion* was refashioned into a musical, *My Fair Lady*, by Alan Jay Lerner in 1956, which led to a marked compression of the story necessary for the opera genre. James Joyce's novel *Ulysses* (1922) is an archetypal text in this field. As the title indicates, the text bears a strong relationship with *The Odyssey*, an ancient Greek epic written by Homer, based on an account of the travels undertaken by Ulysses. In spite of the self-proclaimed adaptive status, Joyce's novel can be read and appreciated as an autonomous text as well. James Joyce narrates the events in the lives of Dubliners during the span of a single day in 1922. The novel breaks away from its hypotext in terms of its spatial and temporal context and offers us immortal characters like Leopold Bloom and Stephen Daedalus. Undoubtedly, a comparison with the Homeric epic enriches the experience of *Ulysses* and enables the reader to unearth a number of additional meanings.

The framing of an adaptation can consist of a shift in focalisation or the point of view. The protagonist of Jean Rhys' *Wide Sargasso Sea* is Antoinette Mason, who is actually a revision of a minor character in Charlotte Bronte's *Jane Eyre*. Antoinette Mason can be recognised as Bertha Rochester, the first wife of Mr Rochester in *Jane Eyre*. She was formerly Bertha Antoinette Mason from Jamaica. Bertha, who is kept under strict vigilance of the trusted servant Grace Poole in *Jane Eyre*, is represented by little more than the sounds of madness she makes at regular intervals. It is revealed that she is suffering from a hereditary form of insanity and is considered a repulsive figure that should be constantly kept in chains and not heeded at all. This marginalised character is transported to the centre by Rhys and is given not only a voice but a history as well. Rhys' *Letters* discloses her intentions behind the composition of *Wide Sargasso Sea*:

> The Creole in Charlotte Bronte's novel is a lay figure – repulsive, which does not matter, and not once alive, which does. She's necessary to the plot, but always she shrieks, howls and laughs horribly, attacks all and sundry – *off stage*. For me (and for you I hope) she must be right *on stage*. (156)

Such an alteration in focalisation can lead to significant differences between the hypotext and hypertext. One of the recurring interests of adaptation is in bringing the silenced characters and the suppressed events of canonical literature to the centre. The Jamaican status of Bronte's Bertha and the delimited description accorded to her by Mr Rochester reveal the latent racism and gender prejudices of the novel, and, maybe, the author. In her novel, Rhys attempts to emancipate not only a

suppressed character but also bring to the forefront the dormant stories of the English literary canon. Helen Carr rightly calls *Wide Sargasso Sea*, "a ground breaking analysis of the imperialism at the heart of British culture" (20). However, ironically, a novel like Rhys' acquires canonical status as a representative of revisionist texts with a feminist and postcolonial impulse.

As stated earlier, a text does not exist in vacuum – it has a spatial and a temporal context within a particular society and a given culture. A shift in national setting or time period can radically alter the meaning and significance of the transposed story. When Shakespeare's *Macbeth* and *Othello* were transcoded by Vishal Bhardwaj as *Maqbool* (2004) and *Omkara* (2006), respectively, the focus of both the movies remained the projection of male desire and male gang politics in India, both very relevant and much-discussed topics of Indian cinema in that decade. Here, it is worthwhile to note that a text is often updated by the adapters in order to reduce the gap between the works created earlier and their contemporary audiences. However, the attempt to bring an existing work closer to the experiential realm of the "new" audience by re-working its context is hazardous and not always successful. When Nikolai Gogol's play *The Government Inspector* was adapted by Sanjay Sahay of Dayanand Sushila Sanskritik Kendra, Gaya, as *Jaanch Padtaal* and staged at Tagore Theatre, Chandigarh, in 2007, it failed to generate the required response in the audience. Sanjay Sahay transported the story of a set of corrupt bureaucrats to Bihar and tried to weave humour around its then political scenario and local dialect. In spite of explicit references to real life politicians and Bollywood heroines, the humour of the play fell flat with the audience. The performances were strained and the comedy was forced. Thus, alteration of the context is no assurance of stage success and is not directly proportional to it.

Adaptation and Appropriation

Adaptation is a double process constituting interpretation and creation. Depending on the perspective, it is also termed as appropriating and salvaging. In practice, adaptation and appropriation intersect at many points and are, as a result, used synonymously. Most importantly, they share an impulse of a more sustained engagement with the source work than mere echoes or allusions. Nonetheless, these two terms have different connotations and any study of re-working texts should also explore the relationship between adaptation and appropriation. Julie Sanders, in *Adaptation and Appropriation*, rightly proclaims that "adaptations and appropriations can vary in how explicitly they state their intertextual

purpose" (2). Where adaptations overtly signal a relationship with its informing source text(s), appropriations occur in a less straightforward context. In appropriations, the intertextual relationship is more embedded. They do not always openly declare themselves as re-interpretations of already existing work(s).

However, appropriations range from the direct announcement of an intertextual relationship, perhaps through the title, to an indirect "absorption" of a literary antecedent. Therefore, adaptations and appropriations cannot submit themselves to clear-cut bifurcation, and the rules are rather flexible. Tom Stoppard's play *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead* (1967) overtly signals an appropriative reading of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* from the standpoint of two minor characters of the play. It is not an adaptation of *Hamlet* because the engagement is not directly acknowledged, but the title suggests a connection with the Shakespearean text. In addition, Stoppard moulds the attendant lords of *Hamlet* in the image of Samuel Beckett's philosophising tramps of *Waiting for Godot* (1952), Vladimir and Estragon. In this play, Stoppard creates a back-story for the two "marginalised" characters of *Hamlet*. The playwright presents us Rosencrantz and Guildenstern in their off-stage moments and focuses on metatheatricality. Many events and characters from Shakespeare's work are visible during the course of the play, but are substantially "decentred" in Tom Stoppard's version.

This kind of defamiliarisation and displacement is a common drive in postcolonial adaptations and appropriations. Characters "marginalised" in the source text are transposed as focal points in the hypertext. They are given a voice and it is through their perspective that we approach a text. Furthermore, adaptations and appropriations provide an insight and build in-roads into the domains of other disciplines, which include law, theatre, music, psychology, and politics. Interestingly, in *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead*, Stoppard explores the theatrical practices of his times by building his play in the "off-stage" moments of *Hamlet*.

Thus, adaptation and appropriation interrelate in many ways, and yet have a few clear distinctions. The primary difference between the two is pertinently identified by Julie Sanders in *Adaptation and Appropriation*: "... appropriation ... frequently adopts a posture of critique, even assault [in relation to the hypotext]" (4). The chief method adopted for the same is to decentralise the main characters of the hypotext, making the margins or the marginalised the "new" centre. Even though appropriations do not openly celebrate their interaction with pre-existing text(s), the engagement with the source text(s), like in adaptations, is a prolonged one. In fact, adaptation, in a literal sense, involves the act of appropriation – the lifting

of another's story, taking possession of it, and then recreating it, thereby salvaging it for a more contemporary audience. Adapters, therefore, first perform the function of interpreters, and then creators.

Adaptation and Intertextuality

Further, from the point of view of its reception, adaptation is also a form of intertextuality. A text, as already mentioned, is not an isolated work but an entity throbbing with multiple echoes and references. It is a multi-laminated work of art that is explicitly connected to other works, experienced as a palimpsest of other works, and this label is a part of its formal identity. It reverberates with echoes of not only specific works but also similar social and artistic conventions. As an example one may cite another play by Tom Stoppard, *Travesties*. The play is an ingenious intertextual collage where Henry Carr recalls his experiences and understanding of three influential twentieth century personalities: James Joyce, Lenin, and Tristan Tzara. This memory play makes use of a Zurich production of Oscar Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest* to present the feelings and perception of Carr within the framework of art. Nicole Boireau, in "Tom Stoppard's Metadrama: The Haunting Repetition," declares that *Travesties* is, "a dizzying composite of *The Importance of Being Earnest* and *Ulysses*" (137).

While transcoding a specific work, an adapter can work with a number of tropes. Tropes are those aspects of the text that are easily adaptable or which have the flexibility as well as the fecundity to adapt to a new time and cultural frame. The theme of a text is one such trope. Themes are adaptable across media and genre. Hans Christian Andersen wrote more than one-hundred fairy tales in children's literature. These tales, over the centuries, have been adapted to performance media in various forms, for the viewership of both children and adults alike. Andersen's stories represent a storehouse of traditional motifs and many accessible themes, such as the quest motif, the lost and found motif, magical tasks, disguises, and good versus evil. In 1984, Andersen's famous tale "The Little Mermaid" was adapted by Hollywood director Ron Howard for a romantic fantasy film, *Splash*, starring Tom Hanks and Daryl Hannah, as a story of love, pain and sacrifice.

Where themes are of primary significance in novels and plays, it is the screenplay which plays the key role in TV and films. However, themes, in the electronic visual media of movies, must reinforce and serve the storyline. On the other hand, characters are significant to both, the narrative and the performance texts. The human subject is central to all

genres and forms of media, so much so that, in the "interactive mode," considered by Linda Hutcheon as the third mode of engagement after "telling" and "showing," the players become the characters themselves (22 -3). In video game adaptations of films, the degree of immersion on the part of the audience is complete, physically and kinaesthetically, and they "become" one of the characters in the fictional world and act out their parts accordingly. Many stories have undergone adaptation in the interactive mode of engagement, which includes the likes of video games and even amusement parks. Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* has been adapted to a dice game in which the player who reaches the church first is the winner. The *Die Hard* and *Star Wars* series have also been adapted as video games.

Next, the units of a story can also be altered in the process of adaptation. The pacing can be tampered with; for example, an adapter might expand or compress a unit, or even delete it. A radical change can be brought about by shifting the focalisation of a text. "Hansel and Gretel," a story of Germanic origin, was formulated into a fairy tale by the Brothers Grimm. In 2002, this tale was adapted by Vishal Bhardwaj into a Hindi film *Makdee*, which was promoted as *The Web of the Witch* in English. Instead of focusing on the ordeal of a girl and a boy, this movie shifts the spotlight to a small village girl called Chunni. Chunni is poles apart from her twin sister Munni, who is sober, studious, and obedient in the traditional sense of the word. Besides the twin sisters, Bhardwaj has added numerous other characters to give a realistic portrayal of an ordinary Indian village with a stereotypical Masterjee (a school teacher), a patriarchal father, a simpleton for a grandmother, a couple of inefficient policemen, and an idiosyncratic "murgiwalah" (the village butcher). The village is haunted by the presence of an eerie bungalow at its territorial periphery, where many a village child has gone missing in the past. It is believed that a witch has taken residence in that bungalow and eats whatever she gets her hands on. The movie basically narrates Chunni's adventures as a naughty daughter, careless student, and brave child who signs a secret pact with the witch in order to rescue Munni from her clutches. In the process, Chunni uncovers some mysterious under-hand operations and is successful in liberating not only Munni but also dozens of other villagers. The director has underlined the revolutionary change in the character of Chunni from being an errant and a wilful child to a brave girl who makes the right use of her strong-mindedness.

Similarly, the conclusion of a text can also be transmediated. The principal source of Shakespeare's *King Lear* is an anonymous play titled *The Chronicle History of King Leir*. Many significant differences are

perceptible in Shakespeare's play and its source, but the most marked alteration is the ending. In *King Leir*, France is victorious in her battle against Britain and the old king is restored to the throne of Britain. Goneril and Regan, along with their husbands, become fugitives and are absent from the final scene. Shakespeare, in contrast, decides to do away with any possible consolation and exploits the full tragic potential of the story by killing all the characters except Albany, Edgar and Kent. Moreover, the French army is vanquished by the British army and Lear is taken prisoner along with Cordelia, paving the way to the tragic end.

Appeal of Adaptation

Adaptation is not a new phenomenon. Ever since the creation of art, adapters have revisited prior works in many forms and manners, but the need to reinvent and recreate prior works has always been questioned. As discussed, one of the appeals of adaptation is its unique synthesis of familiarity and invention. Prior knowledge of the story lends confidence to the reader/audience, allowing them a comfortable space in which they can critically analyse a given text. This is equated with the comfort and the pleasure derived from ritualistic cycles which are repeated every year, and yet there are extensions in the methods adopted to celebrate them. Correspondingly, adaptation is not a blind copy in any mode of reproduction. There are frequent repetitions of stories accompanied with variation, which become a source of delight and surprise for the recipient.

Intertextual pleasure is another appeal of adaptations for the "knowing" audience, who are able to realise that the work is derived from more than one source (Hutcheon 120). Peter Allen David, an American writer noted for his prolific work in comic books, mingles serious issues with references to popular culture. In his novel adaptation of *Spider-Man* in 2002, Mary Jane stumbles upon Harry, who is engrossed in reading *Interview with a Vampire*. She tells him that she has seen the movie version of Anne Rice's book and the little girl in the film "creeped" her out (in Hutcheon 126). Only those who are familiar with the movie adaptation of *Interview with a Vampire* will catch the hidden joke in her remark. The actor Kristen Dunst, who plays Mary Jane in the *Spider-Man* trilogy (2002-7), at the age of 12, played the "creepy" child-vampire in the 1994 screen adaptation of Rice's novel. Similarly, Farah Khan's Bollywood extravaganza *Om Shanti Om* (2007) is not only a metatheatrical vesion of the art of movie-making and its behind-the-scenes arrangements, but is also replete with in-jokes and witty references. Amusing anecdotes woven around renowned Bollywood directors like Manmohan Desai and Sooraj

Chand Barjatiya, and actors like Rajesh Khanna, Manoj Kumar, and Govinda are sources of comedy and interest for the "knowing" audience only. At the same time, the movie is also a fine example of intertextual revisitation. On one hand the movie is a remake of Subhash Ghai's 1980 film *Karz*, starring Rishi Kapoor, and on the other hand the latter half is explicitly modelled on *Madhumati* (1958), a landmark film by Bimal Roy on the subject of reincarnation. Such intertextual echoes lead to an enriching and elitist experience for the viewers. The interplay between various works results in repetition with variation and opens up possibilities for fresh interpretations.

It is also argued that, economically, adaptations are reliable and assure good turnovers at the box office. In order to survive in a commercial market, those associated with expensive art forms like films, musicals, and theatre productions turn to "safe bets" with ready audiences. Moreover, the pedagogical value of literary adaptations is an additional factor responsible for their popularity. Students, teachers, and scholars of literature form a large portion of the market of adaptation works. It is, therefore, not surprising that there are more than one-hundred adaptations of Charles Dickens' *Great Expectations* for stage, radio, and screen. Hollywood movies and British television specialise in adapting "tried," "tested," and "trusted" nineteenth-century novels (Ellis 3). It is also widely accepted that a screen or a television adaptation reaches a larger audience than that of a book. Adaptations not only exert a pull on the "knowing" audience but also create new consumers through the world of electronic media. The radio plays of Friedrich Dürrenmatt cater to a different community than his stage plays.

It cannot be denied that there are personal reasons for choosing to either adapt a work or stage/film an adaptation. In doing so, the adapter or the director not only reinterprets a text but also takes a position on it. Shakespearean adaptations in Britain are undertaken in the name of national culture and given almost reverential treatment. These adaptations are intended as tributes to commemorate the power of a canonical cultural authority. At the same time, the purpose behind an adaptation of Shakespeare might be to subvert this very authority in a historically colonised context. There are other cultural and historical reasons instrumental in significantly inspiring an adapter and motivating them to select a certain text for adaptation. Neelam Man Singh Chowdhry saw a performance of *The Suit* in 1993 in London enacted by the Market Theatre Company from Johannesburg. The play was a theatrical version of a short story written by a South African writer, Can Themba. Neelam Man Singh claims that she was so affected by the play at that time that it haunted her

until she decided to adapt and stage it. The collapse of a relationship, the gradual disintegration of the wife, and the question of justice and retribution tossed up by the play stayed in Neelam Man Singh's memory for almost ten years. She re-envisions the play as an exploration of many facets of a man-woman relationship, including adultery, emotional violence, and loss of love and faith. From being a four-page story on the subject of apartheid, *The Suit* becomes a sensitive and moving play about marital disintegration.

The need and the popularity of adaptations are also associated with the acceptance of narrative as some kind of human universal, through which we try to make our world and actions more comprehensible for us. J. Edward Chamberlin believes that stories are created to give shape and meaning to our presence in the world (Hutcheon 175 -6). But, to explain the repetition of stories, J. Hillis Miller states, "We need the 'same' stories over and over, then, as one of the most powerful, perhaps the most powerful, of ways to assert the basic ideology of our culture" (Ibid, 72). Adaptations represent and reinforce a basic cultural ideology on one hand, and depict necessitated progress on the other.

An Overview

Historically, adaptations can be traced back to the very evolution of culture and its consequent mythology. Sanders, in *Adaptation and Appropriation*, fittingly observes that "A culture's mythology is its body of traditional narratives," and that, "Mythical literature depends upon, incites even, perpetual acts of reinterpretation in new contexts, a process that embodies the very idea of appropriation" (63). Mythical speech has the quality of being communicated across generations and cultures through the process of relocation and recontextualisation. Familiar mythic templates are adopted by succeeding generations of story-tellers for their creative purposes. The myths are evoked, altered, and then refashioned by the adapters according to the social, political, aesthetic, and/or cultural requirements. The scriptures of widely practised religions of the world serve as popular storehouses as well as carriers of myths and legends. In Asia, the epics of Ramayana and Mahabharata have perennially stirred the creative re-imaginings of writers and served as fountainheads for an endless stream of literary treasure. The tales embedded in these epics are pregnant with lessons in the fields of political administration, strategic combat, tolerance, and morality, which, in turn, have been frequently appropriated by writers for literary, pedagogical, and entertainment purposes. Their adaptation and appropriation is not limited to books and