

Beyond Fidelity: Diverse Approaches to Literary Adaptation in the Globalized Twenty-First Century

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Abstract

The twenty-first century has witnessed a proliferation of literary adaptations across various media, from film and television to video games and graphic novels. Adaptations of literary texts from print to screen speak to the abiding appeal of literature and the popularity of film as a medium of mass entertainment. The issue of fidelity often dampens the significance of creative interventions in the field of literary adaptation. However, in recent years, fidelity has been considered a limited metric for the evaluation of literary adaptations. Instead, a more subtle understanding of adaptation as a creative process that engages with the original text while proposing unique interpretations is evolving. It is noteworthy that contemporary literary adapters are interested in exploring how literary works can be reimagined for diverse audiences. Emphasis on presenting the cultural and social realities of the present day through adaptations has become one of the key trends in contemporary literary adaptations. These diverse approaches to literary adaptations have brought about a significant shift in adaptation criticism. In the twenty-first century, literary adaptations can be defined, in Linda Hutcheon's words, as "a repetition without replication" (Hutcheon, 149).

Keywords

Literary adaptation, Twenty-first century, Fidelity, Reinterpretation, Intertextuality.

Introduction

In the globalized world, people are eager to know the cultural values, customs, and socio-political conditions of different parts of the world. This has sparked an interest in adapting texts from diverse literary sources and making them globally recognized. These adaptations allow the audience to encounter things from an unfamiliar perspective by highlighting the distinctive cultural context of the original work. For example, in adaptations of Japanese literary works, the country's distinctive aesthetic sensibilities might be highlighted, whereas adaptations of South African literature may explore themes of social inequality and political upheaval.

While important in the adaptation process, the notion of fidelity hinders the creative approaches that can impart a new twist to existing stories and make them relatable to the target audience. For instance, classic novels might be adapted to contemporary settings and explore the relevance of old stories in the current time. This approach incorporates themes of the original work while escalating the relevance of a literary text by adapting it to a contemporary socio-cultural background.

Literary texts can be adapted to explore historical narratives. The 2003 film *Pinjar*, a Hindi film adaptation of Amrita Pritam's novel by the same name, re-reads the turmoil of partition and the traumatized minds of people from the Hindu and Muslim communities by presenting a love story that flourishes amidst the turbulence. Sometimes, adapters choose to subvert the original text's conceptual or political stand. In the film, *The English Patient* (1996), a cinematic adaptation of Michael Ondaatje's novel, the scene of the news of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki was removed to avoid controversy related to the scene. Davis Lean's film adaptation of Boris Pasternak's novel *Doctor Zhivago* subverts the political issue, and most of the attention was given to forming a love story that can attract the audience to theaters.

Intertextuality states a relationship between a text and other texts, and it can be employed in adaptation to create new meaning and layers of interpretation. By referencing or incorporating elements from other works, adaptation can engage with existing cultural narratives and invite audiences to consider the connections between different stories. The intertextual approach can aid in reimagining classical literature by making it more relevant to modern audiences.

The contemporary world is dealing with various challenges, such as social inequality, climate change, and discrimination. Adaptations, by adding a new

dimension to the story, can work as an influential platform for raising awareness and igniting discussion. Adaptations that recontextualize the texts to explore contemporary themes can offer a critical interpretation of current events and encourage spectators to reflect on their own role in shaping society.

Beyond the traditional focus on fidelity to the original text, contemporary adaptations often discover innovative approaches that reflect cultural specificity, employ intertextuality, and address social and political issues. By challenging conventions and engaging with contemporary audiences in meaningful ways, these adaptations contribute to a vibrant and evolving cultural landscape. Under the influence of globalization, we can expect to see even more innovative and thought-provoking literary adaptations in the years to come.

Literary adaptation, the process of transforming a literary work into another medium, often involves a delicate balancing act between preserving the original text's essence and making it accessible to a new audience. This task can be accomplished with the common approaches to literary adaptation, which are cultural translation and localization.

Adaptations use a productive translation of the source text that aims to be relevant in the target cultural context rather than a literal transference of the text. Literary works are profoundly rooted in their cultural contexts. When a literary work is adapted for a different culture, it is crucial to consider how these cultural elements will be understood and appreciated by the new audience. There are several strategies that can be employed in cultural translation. One approach is to replace culturally specific references with ones that are familiar to the target audience. For instance, an allusion to a mythological character in the original text might be replaced with a mythological character in the adaptation that is familiar to the target audience. Another strategy is to explain or contextualize culturally specific elements through dialogue or narration. This can help the audience understand the significance of these elements without introducing excessive alteration in the original text.

Cultural translation can also involve adapting the language and style of the original text to suit the target audience better. This might involve simplifying complex language, adjusting the tone of the narrative, or even changing the point of view of the story. While these adaptations can be necessary to make a literary work accessible to a wider audience, they must be done carefully to avoid losing the original author's voice and intent.

Review of Related Literature

Colleta C. D. (2012): Cross-cultural or transcultural film adaptation is a transformative act that takes place between fiction and film. It is a journey of transformation that transmutes a fiction into a different medium while incorporating new interpretations of the text. The key conception of transcultural adaptation is a fusion of different cultural aesthetics, and this cultural dialogism prepares a new version of the original text that extends the cultural boundary of a text. This complex interplay of cultural ideologies adds new meaning to the text. Adaptation is not simply the transference of the text, but alteration occurs in the story based on the cultural predilections of the target audience. It becomes necessary to find equivalent cultural elements or create new ones that capture the same meaning and emotional impact. Changes that are made in the adaptation add a multiplicity of perspectives. By reviewing the story from a different perspective or introducing new elements, adapters can offer critiques of the original work or explore alternative interpretations.

Faniran, Oyeniya, & Olusanya (2022): Cultural translation or localization is one of the most common approaches to literary adaptation. This requires familiarizing the original text to resonate with the target audience's cultural context. For example, the 2014 Hindi film *Haider*, an adaptation of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* (1603), reimagines the story to appeal to the target audience, including all the famous scenes from the play that hold symbolic significance, but the socio-cultural context changes to enhance the impact of the story and connect to the Indian audience. These adaptations offer a sense of connection and relatability by adapting the source material to fit a new audience's cultural models and expectations. Cultural translation is a vital aspect of literary adaptation. By carefully considering the cultural context of the original work and the needs of the target audience, adapters can create adaptations that are both faithful to the original text and engaging to new readers.

Cultural translation serves as a bridge between different cultures, allowing audiences to appreciate the richness and diversity of literature from around the world. However, cultural translation is not simply a matter of replacing one cultural reference with another. It requires a deep understanding of both the original and target cultures. If done poorly, localization can result in a distorted or offensive portrayal of the original text. Cultural translation can manifest in various ways. One common approach is to replace culturally specific references with ones that are familiar to the target audience. For example, a reference to a particular food or holiday in the

original text might be replaced with a similar one in the target culture. This ensures that the audience can connect with the narrative on a personal level and avoid feeling alienated by unfamiliar elements.

Hutcheon L. (2006): Adaptation is a ubiquitous notion presented everywhere in every form of media. The notion of adaptation is apt in the postmodern world of believing in multiple narratives. Twentieth-century critics derided adaptation as a simple modification of the text, but adaptation is now reckoned as a creative transference of a story in the twenty-first century. Film adaptations are most popular because they engage enormously with the masses. The core of the adaptation remains passing the message of the text and entertaining the masses. Adaptation has an integral relationship with the original text as well as with the aesthetic taste of the target audience. The original text's themes sometimes interplay with the new interpretations of the text given by the adaptation, which either adds more rhetorical questions to the narrative or moulds the perspective or single interpretation. Audiences can discover new ways of interpreting and appreciating literary texts while also experiencing the innovative and exciting works of contemporary filmmakers and writers. Adaptations offer a fresh perspective on familiar stories and invite audiences to engage with the material in new and unexpected ways.

Stam R. (2017): In the twenty-first century, literary adaptations explore diverse approaches beyond the concept of fidelity. In recent years, there has been a growing trend towards intertextuality and mashups in literary adaptations. This involves combining elements from multiple texts, often from different genres or cultural contexts. For example, the 2008 film *Slumdog Millionaire*, directed by Danny Boyle, is an adaptation of an Indian novel *Q&A* by Vikas Swarup, including several cultural images of India and references from the Indian entertainment industry. By blending different genres and influences, these adaptations create a unique and engaging experience that appeals to a diverse audience. Another approach to literary adaptation involves reinterpretation and innovation. This entails departing from the original text in significant ways, either to explore new themes or to experiment with different narrative structures. For instance, the 2013 film *The Great Gatsby* is a visually striking adaptation that emphasizes the excesses and decadence of the Roaring Twenties while also exploring themes of class, love, and the American Dream.

Collaborative adaptation is another approach that has become gradually common in the twenty-first century. This involves bringing together writers, directors,

and other creative professionals from different backgrounds to work on a single adaptation. From cultural translation and localization to reinterpretation, innovation, intertextuality, and collaborative adaptation, these approaches contribute to the richness and dynamism of contemporary adaptations.

Results

One of the primary reasons for reinterpretation and innovation in literary adaptations is to make the original work more accessible to a wider audience. By updating the setting, language, and cultural references, adaptors can bridge the gap between the historical context of the original text and the contemporary world. For example, a Shakespearean play can be modernized by setting it in a contemporary urban environment, allowing audiences to connect with the characters and themes in a more relatable way.

Reinterpretation and innovation can provide an opportunity to explore new perspectives and interpretations of the original text. By deviating from the author's intended meaning or adding new elements to the story, adaptors can offer fresh insights and challenge audiences to think critically about the work. This can lead to more nuanced and complex interpretations of the original text, expanding its significance and relevance.

Literary adaptation, the process of translating a literary work into another medium, has become a ubiquitous practice in contemporary culture. One of the most common approaches to this process involves the strategic use of intertextuality and mashups. These techniques, while not mutually exclusive, enrich the adapted work by drawing upon existing cultural references and narratives.

Intertextuality, a term coined by Julia Kristeva, refers to the way in which texts are interconnected and influence each other. In the context of literary adaptation, intertextuality can manifest in various forms. For instance, an adapted work might explicitly reference or quote from the original text, creating a sense of familiarity and nostalgia for the source material. Alternatively, the adaptation might subtly allude to other texts, inviting viewers or readers to make connections and draw parallels between the adapted work and its intertexts.

Mashups, on the other hand, involve combining elements from multiple sources to create a unique work. In the realm of literary adaptation, mashups can take many forms, from the blending of genres and styles to the incorporation of characters or plotlines from different texts. For example, a mashup adaptation might

combine elements of science fiction and fantasy, or it might feature characters from multiple literary works interacting in a new setting.

However, the use of intertextuality and mashups also presents certain challenges. One potential drawback is that these techniques sometimes rely overly on the original text or its intertexts. If an adaptation is too heavily indebted to its sources, it may fail to establish its own identity and originality. Additionally, the use of intertextuality and mashups can be risky, as it requires a delicate balance between familiarity and innovation. If an adaptation is too reliant on nostalgia or fan service, it may alienate audiences who are unfamiliar with the original texts.

Collaborative adaptation is the ability to draw upon diverse expertise. Screenwriters, directors, producers, and actors each bring their own distinct strengths to the table. Screenwriters can ensure that the plot, characters, and themes of the original work are faithfully translated to the screen. Directors can visualize the story and bring it to life through their unique aesthetic and storytelling style. Producers can provide the necessary resources and guidance to ensure that the project is executed successfully. Moreover, actors can breathe life into the characters, bringing them to the screen in a way that resonates with audiences.

Conclusion

The notion of fidelity is no longer equitable for evaluating various forms of literary adaptations in the twenty-first century. Instead, a more nuanced understanding of adaptation as a creative process is emerging. By exploring the cultural and historical context, challenging dominant narratives, distorting the lines between high and popular culture, and making an adaptation relevant and evocative to the cultural realities of contemporary society, contemporary adaptations are expanding the boundaries of representation and offering innovative and captivating ways to engage with literary works. Adaptations of literary classics may incorporate elements of popular genres such as science fiction, fantasy, or horror. This blending can appeal to a wider audience and introduce new perspectives on the original text. Additionally, adaptations may incorporate interactive elements or immersive experiences, such as virtual reality or augmented reality, to enhance the storytelling experience.

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