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Where? When?
(Contexts)

The History Man is a story about the dying of the liberationist culture of the Sixties, the fading of the era of student revolution, and the book was set, appropriately, in 1972. It was published in 1975, just, as it were, on the cusp between the end of the Sixties radical culture and the emergence of the Seventies—a very contemporary work. But by the time it appeared on British television in 1981, Mrs. Thatcher had been elected to office. We were in the era of Thatcherismus, of the new conservatism. Under Thatcherismus, the entire cultural and political attitude toward the Sixties had been transformed; it was an adversary that had to be overcome. So where the novel version of *The History Man* in 1975 was a kind of half-tragic and half-ironic version of a generation that was dying, the television version of *The History Man* is really a commentary from a later era on what was wrong with an earlier one. So the values of the story, the

myth and meaning of the story, had also been adapted in the process of translation from novel to screen.

—Malcolm Bradbury, on the adaptation of his novel

The Vastness of Context

As Malcolm Bradbury suggests, even without any temporal updating or any alterations to national or cultural setting, it can take very little time for context to change how a story is received. Not only what is (re)accentuated but more importantly how a story can be (re)interpreted can alter radically. An adaptation, like the work it adapts, is always framed in a context—a time and a place, a society and a culture; it does not exist in a vacuum. Fashions, not to mention value systems, are context-dependent. Many adapters deal with this reality of reception by updating the time of the story in an attempt to find contemporary resonance for their audiences: when *Here Comes Mr. Jordan* (1941) was remade in 1978 as *Heaven Can Wait*, relevant anti-nuclear and environmental themes of the day were inserted (Seger 1992: 65).

I have been arguing that adaptation—that is, as a *product*—has a kind of "theme and variation" formal structure or repetition with difference. This means not only that change is inevitable but that there will also be multiple possible causes of change in the *process* of adapting made by the demands of form, the individual adapter, the particular audience, and now the contexts of reception and creation. This context is vast and variegated. It includes, for instance, material considerations:

> Just as a painting changes when it is moved from the Eastern [*sic*] end of a church and placed in an art gallery, so a play by Shakespeare, or an opera by Mozart, changes its character according to the physical format in which it is presented. A play that started its theatrical life on the unfurnished platform of the Globe and then went on to be pictorially represented in the Victorian theater, with further alterations in physical format when thrust on to the apron stages that developed after the 1950s, has undergone changes that are just as far reaching as the ones that result from reinterpretations of the spoken lines. (J. Miller 1986: 60)

Likewise, the materiality involved in the adaptation's medium and mode of engagement—the kind of print in a book, the size of the television screen, the particular platform upon which a game is played—is part of the context of reception and often of creation as well. Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno famously argued, in *Dialectic of Enlightenment,* that the sound film had blurred the difference between reality and its representation, leaving "no room for imagination or reflection on the part of the audience" (1947/1972: 126). But even they would not have predicted the ontologically bizarre phenomenon of Reality TV. With its mix of fact and fiction, a show like *Survivor* is arguably an adaptation not only of "reality" but also of the ethos, as well as the story of Robinson Crusoe (Stam 2005: 99).

What I am calling context also includes elements of presentation and reception, such as the amount and kind of "hype" an adaptation gets: its advertising, press coverage, and reviews. The celebrity status of the director or stars is also an important element of its reception context. Jonathan Demme's 1998 film adaptation of Toni Morrison's novel, *Beloved* (1987), starred Oprah Winfrey; just as significantly for another arts community, however, *Margaret Garner* (2005), the opera adaptation of part of the novel by Morrison (music by Richard Danielpour) was the vehicle for two major African American singers, Denyce Graves and Jessye Norman. It is not that the larger social and racial issues are *not* also part of the audience's context here, but the fact that they are incarnated in the particular stars conditions the work's meaning and impact.

As this example might suggest, the time is clearly right, in the United States, as elsewhere, for adaptations of works on the timely topic of race. Readiness to reception and to production can depend on the "rightness" of the historical moment. In Italy, for instance, during the Libyan War (1911–12), film adaptations of epics like *El Cid* and *Gerusalemma liberata* abounded—apt expressions of Italy's nationalist-imperialist ambitions. Because epic adaptations continued to flourish through the Fascist years, it is not too surprising that there was an anti-adaptation move by the postwar neo-realists (M. Marcus 1993: 5). It may be no accident, some argue, that "heritage cinema" adaptations flourished in Thatcher's aesthetically and ideologically conservative

Britain (Vincendeau 2001: xix). This wider context of creation and reception must therefore be of interest to any theory of adaptation that defines the term as process, as well as product.

Whether an adapted story is told, shown, or interacted with, it always happens in a particular time and space in a society. Therefore, the videogame adaptation of *The Godfather* will be experienced differently today by an Italian American player than by a Korean one. And adapters know this and take it into consideration. Byron's fragment of a vampire tale was expanded by his doctor, John Polidori, into *The Vampyre* in 1819, and within a year the story had been adapted into a three-act melodrama (by Pierre Carmouche, Achille Jouffrey, and Charles Nodier). But the French adapters changed the Byronic Lord Ruthven's vampiric lust into the passion of a dedicated womanizer. In the same year (1820), this play was adapted, not simply translated, for the English stage by James Robinson Planché; in this national context, the villain was made sympathetic for British audiences because, even though his vampirism was made into the curse for his crimes, he has appropriate moral qualms about his bloody deeds. When both Peter Joseph von Lindpaintner and Heinrich August Marschner created their different German Romantic opera adaptations of the vampire's story, the demonic returned—and so on, throughout the many cinematic adaptations of the last century undertaken by adapters of many different national cultures.

Nations and media are not the only relevant contexts to be considered. Time, often very short stretches of it, can change the context even within the same place and culture. In 1815, Franz Schubert adapted—in this case, set to music for piano and solo voice—a well-known earlier (1782) ballad by Goethe, "Erlkönig" (though the song was not published until 1821). Richard Taruskin sees Schubert's *Lied* as decidedly different in musical emphasis and significance from the other adaptation done three years later (1818) by Carl Loewe. These Romantic composers were contemporaries and thus shared much of the general national musical ideology that had led to the development of the *Lied* genre, especially the link between personal expression and the collective ("das Volk"). But Loewe's setting reveals, among many other things, his "greater nature mysticism" (Taruskin 2005: 3.158), a

difference that is not only individual but also reflects subtle changes that Taruskin sees happening in German culture at large. To move to an example closer to home, after Bruce Springsteen's celebratory rock song "Born in the USA" was appropriated by the American Right, he chose to rerecord it alone, on a dark stage, with only an acoustic guitar. His self-cover became an adaptation in that the new context of protest transformed the piece into a somber dirge. Time too changes meaning and always has.

Time also has the ability to make us forget, of course, but we may not ever have known things like details from a temporal context that could be relevant to issues of power. Michael Radford's 2005 film adaptation of *The Merchant of Venice* historicizes, through visual imagery, things of which Shakespeare's audiences (or today's) might or might not have been aware. By having his Venetian Jews wear identifying red hats and his prostitutes appear bare-breasted—as both had to by law at the time of the play's setting—the director makes this a play *about* both anti-Semitism and the role of women. The camera narrates and interprets for us as we move through the labyrinthine streets and canals of historical Venice, watching Antonio spit at Shylock as he passes him on the Rialto bridge.

Transcultural Adaptation

Where is as important a question to ask about adaptation, however, as *when*. Adapting from one culture to another is nothing new: the Romans adapted Greek theater, after all. But what has been called "cultural globalization" (Cuddy-Keane 2003: 544) has increased the attention paid to such transfers in recent years. Often, a change of language is involved; almost always, there is a change of place or time period. Akira Kurosawa's *Throne of Blood* (1957) is a famous Japanese film adaptation and major cultural transposition of *Macbeth*, for instance, just as *The Magnificent Seven* (1960) is a Hollywood remake of Kurosawa's *Seven Samurai* (1954). Almost always, there is an accompanying shift in the political valence from the adapted text to the "transculturated" adaptation. Context conditions meaning, in short.

It seems logical that time and place shifts should bring about alterations in cultural associations; however, there is no guarantee

that adapters will necessarily take into account cultural changes that may have occurred over time. When Alain Boublil, Richard Maltby, Jr., and Claude-Michel Schönberg brought Giacomo Puccini's early twentieth-century operatic story of American sexual imperialism in Japan (*Madama Butterfly* [1904]) into the 1970s world of American political imperialism in Vietnam in *Miss Saigon*, they left intact what was, by the musical's premiere in 1989, a dated and much contested stereotype of the Asian woman.

Sometimes, as we saw in an earlier chapter, changes are made to avoid legal repercussions. F.W. Murnau's 1922 *Nosferatu* changed Bram Stoker's *Dracula* in terms of time (dating it back 50 years), place (moving it from Transylvania to Germany and from London to Bremen), and even names (Dracula became Count Orlock). Today those changes would likely be enough to escape copyright infringement suits, but they were not sufficient at the time. Most often adaptations are not backdated but rather are updated to shorten the gap between works created earlier and contemporary audiences: in adapting Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, Franco Zeffirelli made his lovers' affection more physical and cut out parts that slowed down the action to satisfy what he perceived as the demands of his film audience in 1968. By 1996, when Baz Luhrmann adapted the same play, the young audience targeted was one attuned to MTV music videos and Hollywood action movies, and this change motivated his gangland setting and frenetic pace. In other words, the reception context determined the changes in setting and style. Just as the psychological novel of the eighteenth century (Sterne) is not like that of the twentieth (Proust), adaptations of the same play that are even decades apart can and should differ: cultures change over time. In the name of relevance, adapters seek the "right" resetting or recontextualizing. This too is a form of transculturation.

For Hollywood, however, transculturating usually means Americanizing a work: the Canadian novel, *Shoeless Joe* (1982) by W.P. Kinsella, may have been named after an American figure, but Phil Robinson's 1989 film of it, *Field of Dreams*, was even more focused south of the 49th parallel. Similarly the characters in A.S. Byatt's very bookish English novel *Possession* (1990) were changed to give American audiences someone to identify with in Neil LaBute's 2002 cinematic adaptation:

the novel's quiet, articulate British Roland became the film's brash and sardonic American Roland. Because Hollywood films are increasingly being made for international audiences, the adaptation might end up not only altering characters' nationalities, but on the contrary, actually deemphasizing any national, regional, or historical specificities.

What happens when a film like the very Italian *Profumo di donna* (1974) is adapted into *Scent of a Woman* a decade later or when *Le Retour de Martin Guerre* (1982) becomes the American Civil War story, *Sommersby* (1993)? David Edelstein argues that the pace gets changed; the life is "streamlined out of the narrative" as temporal tricks and any possible plot ambiguities are eliminated. In addition family values have to be respected while at the same time the story must be "dopily" over-romanticized (2001: 20). Obviously no fan of Americanizations, Edelstein asserts, "It would be terrific to report that Hollywood does not, contrary to popular belief, have a coarsening effect on the foreign properties it remakes. Terrific, but wrong. In this area, as in few others, studios live up to their reputation as titanic forces of philistinism" (3). But wit aside, is Hollywood really alone in this kind of changing? When, in 2005, French director Jacques Audiard adapted James Toback's *Fingers* (1978) into *The Beat That My Heart Skipped*, the dark tale of psychic contradictions against a backdrop of 1970s New York became a more realistic but considerably less anguished story set in twenty-first-century Paris. Context can modify meaning, no matter where or when.

Transcultural adaptations often mean changes in racial and gender politics. Sometimes adapters purge an earlier text of elements that their particular cultures in time or place might find difficult or controversial; at other times, the adaptation "de-represses" an earlier adapted text's politics (Stam 2005b: 42–44). Even within a single culture, the changes can be so great that they can in fact be considered transcultural, on a micro- rather than macrolevel. In the same society, political issues can change with time, as we have seen in the example of David Henry Hwang's new version of Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein's *Flower Drum Song*. Perhaps not surprisingly, Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew* has been adapted time and time again for the movie and television screen—but differently each time—from the suffragette years of the early twentieth century right up to the 1980s feminist

backlash. Similarly it has been argued that Bram Stoker's *Dracula* deployed a myth about the sacred role of women that was particularly appropriate to his time, but that myth seems to be one that can be adapted readily to a new social reality with each of its frequent adaptations (McDonald 1993: 102).

Of course, the politics of transcultural adaptations can shift in unpredictable directions too. When Arthur Schnitzler's sexually and dramatically radical 1900 play *Der Reigen* (or *La Ronde*) was transculturated into Eric Bentley's *Round Two* (1990), there was no banning and no obscenity trial, despite the translation of the straight Austrian sex into the gay American context (see Schechter 1986: 8). Once again, this same temporally induced deradicalizing shift can happen with adaptations within the same culture: the 1928 edgy comedy called *The Front Page* and written by Ben Hecht and Charles MacArthur was adapted often to film, but the best-known adaptation is likely the 1940 *His Girl Friday* (director Howard Hawks; script by Charles Lederer). Although the male ace reporter was transformed into a woman, the gain in women's visibility was matched by the loss of that edge to sentimentality. In 2003, John Guare adapted the play and the film together into a new play, *His Girl Friday*, which added lines from the play that the somewhat sanitizing film had removed, but somehow the new play managed to be even less edgy than the film had been.

Indigenization

As we have seen in Chapter 3, the adapter works in one context, but the meaning he or she establishes within that frame of reference can change over time. Alexandre Dumas, *fils*, adapted the true story of his relationship with his former beloved, Alphonsine Duplessis, into a novel (1848) and then a play (1852) called *La Dame aux camélias*. What began as a warning about the "pernicious threat of prostitution to decent bourgeois family life in Paris in the middle of the nineteenth century" (Redmond 1989: 72) changed considerably with each subsequent adaptation. Giuseppe Verdi's operatic version, *La Traviata* (1853), scandalized audiences, in part because it made its courtesan heroine sympathetic—not a surprising shift, given Verdi's relationship at the time with an unmarried mother, the singer Giuseppina Strepponi. The

1936 Greta Garbo film *Camille*, however, traded on its star's glamor to allow the love story to overtake any social argument. But when Pam Gems adapted the film back to the stage in her 1985 *Camille* for the Royal Shakespeare Company, politics returned, but a different politics this time. The feminist writer introduced themes that the earlier works by men had silenced: sexual and physical abuse and abortion. This is adaptation: repetition without replication.

The context of reception, however, is just as important as the context of creation when it comes to adapting. Imagine an audience watching any of the new adaptations of *Othello* during the O.J. Simpson trial: the fall of a hero, the theme of spousal abuse, and the issue of racial difference would inevitably take on a different inflection and even force than Shakespeare could ever have imagined. Contemporary events or dominant images condition our perception as well as interpretation, as they do those of the adapter. There is a kind of dialogue between the society in which the works, both the adapted text and adaptation, are produced and that in which they are received, and both are in dialogue with the works themselves. Economic and legal considerations play a part in these contexts, as do evolving technologies, as we have seen. So too do things like religion. Canadian First Nations playwright Tomson Highway has spoken revealingly of the adaptation of his plays to the Japanese stage. In North American stage productions of *Dry Lips Oughta Move to Kapuskasing* (1987), one actor plays a trinity of female goddesses (Aphrodite, Pregnant Earth Mother, and Athena) in an echo of Christian imagery; in contrast, when the play was transculturated to polytheistic Japan, three women were used and dance and silence replaced dialogue as the major modes of communication.

As this example suggests, performance media present the greatest challenges for adaptations across cultures and not only because of the presence of paying audiences—on site and ready to respond with incomprehension or anger. Adapting across cultures is not simply a matter of translating words. For audiences experiencing an adaptation in the showing or interacting modes of engagement, cultural and social meaning has to be conveyed and adapted to a new environment through what Patrice Pavis calls the "language-body" (1989: 30). The intercultural, he says, is the "intergestural": the visual is as important

as the aural. In transfers from a telling to a performance mode, differences of philosophy, religion, national culture, gender, or race can create gaps that need filling by dramaturgical considerations that are as likely to be kinetic and physical as linguistic. Facial expressions, dress, and gestures take their place along with architecture and sets to convey cultural information that is both verisimilar and an "index of the ideologies, values, and conventions by which we order experience and predicate activity" (Klein 1981: 4).

When stories travel—as they do when they are adapted in this way across media, time, and place—they end up bringing together what Edward Said called different "processes of representation and institutionalization" (1983: 226). According to Said, ideas or theories that travel involve four elements: a set of initial circumstances, a distance traversed, a set of conditions of acceptance (or resistance), and a transformation of the idea in its new time and place (1983: 226–27). Adaptations too constitute transformations of previous works in new contexts. Local particularities become transplanted to new ground, and something new and hybrid results.

Susan Stanford Friedman has used the anthropological term "indigenization" to refer to this kind of intercultural encounter and accommodation (2004). In political discourse, indigenization is used within a national setting to refer to the forming of a national discourse different from the dominant; in a religious context, as in mission church discourse, it refers to a nativized church and a recontextualized Christianity. But the advantage of the more general anthropological usage in thinking about adaptation is that it implies agency: people pick and choose what they want to transplant to their own soil. Adapters of traveling stories exert power over what they adapt.

For most of us there are two small devices that enable ease of travel—the adapter plug and the electrical converter—and for me these offer the best (punning) metaphor I can think of to explain how this aspect of adaptation works. Power comes in different forms, in addition to AC/DC and 120v/220v, of course, and it can be adapted *for use* in different contexts (different countries); the adapter plug and the converter allow the transformation of power to a useable form for a particular place or context. This is how indigenization functions as well.

The cultural power that has accrued to the works of Shakespeare can be adapted and adopted by the British in the name of patriotism and national culture. But for Americans, Australians, New Zealanders, Indians, South Africans, or Canadians, that power must be adapted into differently historically colonized contexts before being transformed into something new. And neither of these kinds of adaptation will resemble the Chinese indigenization in which Shakespeare's work is transformed through cultural transcoding into a "celebration of individuality, the awakening of self-consciousness and competitive individualism, a moral principle against obscurantism, and the concepts of freedom, equality, and universal love" (Zhang 1996: 242)—in short, the ideology and values of a democratic society offered in opposition or contrast to those of a totalitarian state.

Indigenizing can lead to strangely hybrid works. The 2003 American musical adaptation of the thirteenth-century Chinese play, *The Orphan of Zhao,* ended up being a kind of "country and eastern" in both form and content. Director Chen Shi-Zheng asked David Greenspan to write new English dialogue and the eclectic songwriter Stephin Merritt to compose the lyrics and music, to be played on an autoharp and two Chinese instruments, the *jinghu* and the *pipa*. Sometimes conventions clash rather than merge, however. When *King Lear* was adapted to the Indian performance tradition of *kathakali*, a classical improvised dance form, two reciters offered part of the verbal text, but in this new aesthetic context, it was the conventions of the dance form that were significant, not the story in itself. Neither novelty nor naturalism has importance in this dance tradition. The adapters, Australian playwright and director David McRovie and actor-dancer Annette Leday, knew these conventions, but it seems not all of their audience did, leaving mystification and not fascination as the result.

In contrast, Gustave Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* (1857) was reworked more successfully by Ketan Mehta in Hindi as *Maya Memsaab* (1992). This story seemed to translate more effectively across cultures because Emma's novel-inspired romanticism found an analogue in the illusions provoked by Bombay musicals. Framed in an investigation over whether the protagonist was a murder victim or a suicide, Mehta's adaptation is a mixture of mystery, erotic film, and musical (for the fantasy and

dream parts). Except for the latter parts, the rest is relatively realistically presented, transcoding well Flaubert's own mix of the romantic and realist (see Stam 2000: 63; 2005a: 183).

Adapters across cultures probably cannot avoid thinking about power. Muhammad 'Uthmān Jalāl's *al-Shaykh Matlūf* is an 1873 Egyptian adaptation of Molière's seventeenth-century French play *Tartuffe*, which freely translated characters and customs as well as language (dialects) into Egyptian contexts. This work is a deliberate and deliberately selective borrowing from the West, a canonical European work fully indigenized into Arabic culture (Bardenstein 1989: 150). A different power differential between colonized and colonizer, however, often plays a role in the adapting process. As mentioned at the end of Chapter 4, Jean-Claude Carrière, who adapted *Mahabharata* for the screen, recognized the "possibility of unconscious colonization by way of vocabulary, since the action of translating Indian words translates our relationship to an entire civilization. To say that we could find an equivalent for every Indian word implies that French culture can in a word appropriate the most profoundly reflected notions of Indian thought" (1985: 14).

Some adaptations tackle the politics of empire from a decidedly postcolonial perspective, thereby changing the context of the adapted work considerably. Patricia Rozema's 1999 film adaptation of Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park* (1814) adds both a feminist and a postcolonial critique of slavery. Similarly, Mira Nair's 2004 version of *Vanity Fair* (1848; script by Julian Fellowes) picks up on the fact that the novel's author, Thackeray, was born in Calcutta to highlight India as the source of a character's wealth. In other words, these adaptations offer a modern rereading of the past that not everyone has found acceptable. For Kamilla Elliott,

> Film adapters build on a hypercorrect historical material realism to usher in a host of anachronistic ideological "corrections" of novels. Quite inconsistently, while adaptations pursue a hyperfidelity to nineteenth-century material culture, they reject and correct Victorian psychology, ethics, and politics. When filmmakers set modern politically correct views against historically correct backdrops, the effect is to authorize these modern ideologies as historically authentic. (2003: 177)

This rereading of the past is obviously not the same as adapting Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* (1813) to Bollywood conventions and a contemporary setting and calling it *Bride and Prejudice*, as did Gurinder Chadha (2004). The postcolonial adaptations are, by definition, willful reinterpretations for a different context, even if the historical accuracy of the time and setting is retained. In other words, this is not unlike a writer and director in 2004 adding women to an adaptation of Plato's famous dialogue on the topic of love, the *Symposium*, because he or she feels that in the twenty-first century women too have important perspectives to offer on the subject. So, in Michael Wirth's film version, Aristophanes and Eryximachus are allowed to cross gender lines.

With indigenizing come accusations of a failure of political nerve or even of less "correctly" changing the politics of adapted works. Steven Spielberg was said to have "repatriarchized" Alice Walker's feminist 1982 novel in his 1985 film of *The Color Purple*. John Ford was accused of shying away from the "socialist drift of the Steinbeck novel" in his 1940 adaptation of *The Grapes of Wrath* (1939; Stam 2000: 73). The possible number and kind of complexities when adapting across cultures are such that another "learning from practice" exercise seems in order in the next section. I have once again chosen an adapted text that has had multiple adaptations across time and place, as well as across medium and genre. It is also a story whose political meaning has changed with those context shifts: it is the story of a woman named Carmen.

Learning from Practice

Why Carmen?

Other viable candidates for this exercise clearly exist, the vampire narrative and *Hamlet* foremost among them. They too revolve around a single protean figure, culturally stereotyped yet retrofitted in ideological terms for adaptation to different times and places. But the narrative of the gypsy woman, Carmen, adds to these significant characteristics a confusing range of political reinterpretations right from the start: is she a dangerous *femme fatale* or an admirable independent woman? These conflicting stereotypes, I argue, have made for the story's continuing

fascination for adapters and audiences alike (see Collier 1994; Maingueneau 1984). As Susan McClary explains, the power of her story lies not in its "ability to inspire consensus, but rather in its success at provoking and sustaining debate along the central fault lines of nineteenth- and twentieth-century culture" (1992: 129). Whether the adaptation portrays Carmen as victim or victimizer, in short, depends on the politics of the particular contexts of creation and reception.

On the surface, this story would not seem to be a prime candidate for multiple adaptations. It does not appear to be an accepted classic with some universal truth at its core; it does not in any obvious way manage to transcend its time and place of creation. The narrative about the misbegotten love of a gypsy woman and a Spanish-Basque soldier is very nineteenth century and very French, even if it is about gypsies and Spain. In 1845, Prosper Mérimée wrote a novella version of a story he had heard from a friend; within a year Marius Petipa had choreographed a concert ballet from it (*Carmen and Her Bullfighter*). But it was not until 30 years later that Georges Bizet adapted it into an opera, and the rest is history—or, as one critic has wittily put it, the rest is discourse: "To a degree unparalleled by any other opera, *Carmen* has become a *discourse*, a multiply-authored, historically developing tangle of bits and pieces from Bizet, Mérimée, high-art criticism, the folk imagination and the movies: of stock images of Spain, opera, melodrama, *femmes fatales* and doomed lovers, and heaven knows what else" (Leicester 1994: 250). If we needed proof of her iconic status, the 2002 "Carmen Conference" at the University of Newcastle upon Tyne would have offered it, in its examination of some of the 77 film adaptations of this story—a sampling of both affirmations and contestations of received notions of gender and ethnicity that constitute the appeal of *Carmen*.

The Carmen Story—and Stereotype

Prosper Mérimée traveled to Spain in the 1830s and wrote about his voyages in the *Revue de Paris*. In the December 29, 1833 issue, he told of a young woman he called "Carmencita" who served him fresh water and gazpacho by the side of a road. She was one of the bewitching Spanish sorceresses, the "sorcières espagnoles" of the title of his article. In 1840, a friend, Mme Eugénie de Montijo, told him the story of a brigand who killed his mistress; in 1844, he wrote to her that he had just read George Borrow's *The Zincali* (1841) and *The Bible in Spain* (1843). In 1845, in the travel biweekly specializing in exotic Third World travel journals, the *Revue des deux mondes* (October 1), Mérimée brought these various influences together to tell the Spanish story of a fierce and jealous bandit and his devious and dangerous fortune-telling gypsy woman. But the narrative frame is scholarly, controlled, and complete with footnotes, as if the foreign world here is a threat to be contained. So too is Carmen.

The fictional narrator is a pedantic French scholar, and it is he who first describes Carmen: she is smoking, an act that is definitely transgressive, even for a tobacco factory worker—indeed, smoking was an identifying signal used by French prostitutes. She is beautiful but not conventionally so; her eyes are fierce and voluptuous. He thinks she might be Moorish, but that is because he cannot bring himself to say "Jewish"; she enlightens him as to her gypsy blood. This woman is a thief and perhaps a murderer; she is petulant and demanding. We later read a second description of Carmen from Don José, the man who loved and killed her. In his eyes, she is sexy, scandalously so in dress and behavior; she has a sharp tongue; she is a liar but she is paradoxically honest in paying her "debts"; and she is extravagant and capricious. Where the narrator called her a sorceress, her lover calls her diabolical. It is her fault that he is jealous; it is her fault that he must kill her.

There is a third view of Carmen in Mérimée's story: that of the author himself. In later years, he added to the text an ethnographic treatise on gypsies, in which the race is presented as animalistic, unprincipled, and unattractive in all respects. In this view it becomes the gypsies' fault that Carmen must die. This orientalized construction of the European "other" is typical of the time and place: Victor Hugo, Théophile Gautier, Alexandre Dumas, and Gustave Flaubert all had traveled to Spain and had exoticized it as oriental in their writings. For each, the Spanish gypsy was like the Jew: both domestic and yet foreign, the other on nearby, if not home, turf.

Bizet's librettists, Henri Meilhac and the Jewish Ludovic Halévy, would have been sensitive to these associations and eager, given the expensive performance medium that is opera, to call up the positive

rather than the negative ones. An *opéra comique*, this first version of *Carmen* consisted of alternating spoken dialogue and song; characters break into song, often at moments of emotional excess. But the bourgeois family audience of the theater known as the Opéra Comique in 1875 Paris was not ready for such excess—or for a woman dying on the stage, killed by her jealous lover. The popular failure of the opera is said to have hastened Bizet's death. Ernest Guiraud prepared a more conventionally operatic version with recitatives for the Vienna opening the next year, adding a chorus and a ballet with music from other works by Bizet. Both versions are decidedly products of the French musical as well as social culture, however.

What is striking is that neither operatic Carmen is the vicious and devious woman of Mérimée's text. The three narrative voices disappear as we move from a telling mode to a showing one. We see and hear Carmen, unmediated by overt male intervention; she speaks/sings for herself. But the librettists too clearly felt some need to contain Carmen: they invented Micäela as a maternally approved rival for Don José's affection and as a pure and innocent foil for Carmen. The opera's gypsy, however, is not a thief, though she is a smuggler; she has not been previously married, and above all, she is independent and feisty. In short, she has been somewhat sanitized for the family-oriented Opéra Comique audience. Halévy admitted that she was a "softer, tamer Carmen," writing to the anxious co-director Adolphe de Leuven that the gypsies would all be made into "comedians" and Carmen's death would be "glossed over"—"in a holiday atmosphere, with a parade, a ballet, a joyful fanfare" (1905/1987: 36). He was not lying, but the contrast between her death and that festive atmosphere actually makes her murder all the more chilling.

Taking only one part of Carmen's story from Mérimée (the Don José part), the librettists made her into a liberated woman, who takes her future into her own hands as only men were allowed to do at the time. This independence is obviously what has attracted modern adapters and audiences alike. But the context of creation was nineteenth-century France, and there such independence was deemed something diabolical to be curbed. Don José repeatedly asks: "Tu est le diable, Carmen?" Fate was called upon to take care of this "problem": dramatized

in Carmen's reading of the cards and rendered audible as a motif in her music, Carmen's fate is to die for her independence in love and life. The opera's shortening and condensing of the novella's plot mean that detail and subtlety are lost, but what is gained is a sense of fated inevitability as the compressed plot hurries to its end.

There is yet another reason why the opera's Carmen differs from that of the novella: she sings. But it is as much how and what she sings as the fact of her vocalizing that make the difference. Just as Mérimée's Carmen was linguistically talented, so Bizet's is a musical virtuoso, but she is also as unpredictable in her music as she is in her behavior. Deemed a triple alien—by her gender, her race, and her class—Carmen proudly sings her identity as other. As McClary has shown, her slippery chromatic music, most of it to sensuous dance tunes, signals her sexuality; ethnic markers of orientalized Spanish music, which differs from the European norm, point us to her racial background; and her most famous songs are based on popular Paris cabaret versions of Spanish and Cuban dance music, the music of the night life of the lower classes (1992: 26–52).

It is this operatic Carmen who would become the stereotype—and the challenge—for interpreters and therefore adapters from then on. For Catherine Clément, in her controversial feminist study *Opera, or the Undoing of Woman*, Carmen is "somewhat whore, somewhat Jewess, somewhat Arab, entirely illegal, always on the margins of life" (1989: 49) and that otherness is what makes her great. But she is also "the image, foreseen and doomed, of a woman who refuses masculine yokes and who must pay for it with her life" (1989: 48). Carmen must die because she acts like a man—or as a feminist *avant la lettre*. For Mario Praz, in contrast, Carmen stands for a "diabolical feminine fascination" that causes men to lose all control and all regard for their social position (1970: 207). In the same vein, Michel Leiris sees Don José as "the wretch whom she has forced to desert" and whom she ridicules "until he kills her": "a bloodthirsty goddess ... the lovely Carmencita, before being murdered, is indeed a murderess" (1963: 54). The battle lines are as clear as the double stereotype: *femme fatale* or liberated woman?

Indigenizing Carmen

Carmen has been called a nomadic, mobile work, one that is an example of geographic and social "transculturality" (Bertrand 1983: 104). The story has certainly circulated widely and displayed a decidedly dynamic and fluid rather than static and fixed meaning. Different cultures at different moments have indigenized this traveling story in their own ways. Depending on the mode and medium selected, of course, different aspects of that story are foregrounded. Paintings of Carmen—such as those of Franz von Stuck in the early twentieth century—inevitably de-narrativize somewhat in adapting, but retain as a result a strong sense of the body and personality of the character. Instrumental adaptations of Bizet's opera music sometimes retain the narrative line, but more often do not, as in Pablo de Sarasate's 1883 *Carmen Fantasy*. Sometimes the plot, in being updated, puts a strain on the very definition of adaptation developed here. Jean-Luc Godard's self-reflexive film *Prénom Carmen* (1983) substitutes Beethoven string quartets for Bizet's music and turns Carmen into a bank-robbing terrorist who knows of her operatic namesake only through the American film *Carmen Jones*. Yet the opera is more than just another intertext; from the film's title on, it haunts the work as a palimpsest.

There are as many ways to indigenize a story as there are ways to tell or show it again. To give a sense of the kind of range in this particular case, I divide the transformations into three dichotomous types: (1) historicizing/dehistoricizing, (2) racializing/deracializing, and (3) embodying/disembodying.

Historicizings/Dehistoricizings Given that the opera *Carmen*, although it is French, is about a gypsy woman in nineteenth-century Spain, its story would seem to be a difficult one to dehistoricize (or to "de-ethnicize"). But adaptations have aimed at doing so and have managed to achieve precisely such a feat. On stage in 1981 and in 1983 on the screen, Peter Brook presented his pared-down adaptation, *La Tragédie de Carmen*. He reworked the libretto with Jean-Claude Carrière and rearranged Bizet's score, with the aid of Marius Constant, recontextualizing tunes so that we interpret them differently, hearing them in their new contexts. He removed his Carmen from her social contexts—she is neither a tobacco factory worker nor a smuggler. An

austere, round, dusty space replaced particularized Spanish sets. He also stripped away the trappings of the *opéra comique* genre, cutting out characters, eliminating the chorus, and excising a variety of comic and exotic details, thereby reducing the work to one act, lasting just over 80 minutes. Four characters remain in what is now a tragedy of four people in two love triangles; two speaking actors supply the rest of the altered narrative action. In Brook's view:

> Carmen has ... the greatest marriage—perhaps of all the operas—between being musically marvelous and having absolutely true human content. These two go hand in hand. The opera is totally accessible. Being in the theater, I'm most interested in what can speak most directly to the most widely assorted people. The music can appeal to anyone without any difficulty, any effort. There are no cultural barriers. (Qtd. in Loney 1983: 12)

For Brook, this spare version captures the universalized story of fate—the human condition: for this adapter, *Carmen* is not about sexual politics, ethnic otherness, or historical specificity.

The contrast with Neapolitan director Francesco Rosi's filmed adaptation of the opera (1984) could not be more striking. Rosi replaces this idea of universalized fate with specific issues of power and human responsibility; instead of removing the social and historical context, he places the story's nineteenth-century Spanish ethnic and class realities in the foreground. Known as a director with a strong interest in social issues, Rosi was attracted to the culture of southern Spain in which the opera is set in part because of its resemblances to his own southern Italian background, with its related poverty, machismo, earthiness, and fondness for song and dance (Citron 2000: 164). This story was not a cultural cliché for him; it was real. So his Carmen is no *femme fatale*, but an uninhibited and life-affirming woman who is in control of her own fate. There is nothing sinister about her sexuality here; it is fully enjoyed. Filming on location and researching everything historical carefully in advance, Rosi places her in the real material culture of Spain, including the oldest Spanish bullring in Ronda; with her, we move right into the tobacco factory and witness working women at their jobs, their babies by their sides. From the start, he plunges the

spectator into a nineteenth-century, hispanized, ethnic world that is not so much picturesque as dark and menacing.

In short, Rosi did not update or rewrite anything; instead, he rehistoricized and in the process "re-ethnicized" the opera, removing the nineteenth-century French context of creation and substituting for it a nineteenth-century Spanish one. In the process, he implicitly played his version of an independent Carmen against the other stereotype of the dangerous seductress. His protagonist does not make a dashing star entrance; we almost miss her as she emerges from the group of workers. In fact, the camera is focused more on an old man, Enrique El Cojio, who is dancing with the women. Rosi uses medium-high-angle traveling shots in which the camera pans (pointedly following the binoculars—and the gaze—of the military commander) to show Carmen moving within a bustling social context: this Carmen is obviously part of a community (Leicester 1994: 269, n.42). But that means that her independence has limits: just as the old man catches our eye before Carmen does and indeed literally leads us, along with the village men, to find her, so Don José controls—or desires to control—the free woman who in fact exerts control over him through her sexuality. He makes her pay for her defiance, aided and abetted by a particular culture's celebration of machismo (in the film's opening bullfight) and its religious cult of women's suffering (the macabre Mater Dolorosa procession of penitents that follows it).

Traveling stories, then, are told—and shown—differently at different times in different places. The very French and very nineteenth-century *Carmen* has been indigenized in radically diverse ways in different contexts of adaptation. But ethnic and national historical identities are not the only variants on this theme. Carmen is not only Spanish; she is a gypsy.

Racializings/Deracializings Nietzsche famously declared that the source of *Carmen*'s cheerfulness was "African"—a "southern, brown, burnt sensibility" (1888/1967: 158); the music's "subtlety belongs to a race, not to an individual" (157), he asserted. The racial identity of Carmen the gypsy was clearly central to Mérimée's ethnographic portrait, but it was arguably just as important to Bizet's equally orientalized version. When Oscar Hammerstein II adapted the opera in its original

opéra comique version as *Carmen Jones* for the Broadway musical stage in 1943 and later for the screen (1954; directed by Otto Preminger, screenplay by Harry Kleiner), race was on his mind as well. His intentions were progressive, even if they might sound patronizing and essentializing today: "The nearest thing in our modern American life to an equivalent of the gypsies in Spain is the Negro. Like the gypsy, he expresses his feelings simply, honestly, graphically. Also as with the gypsy there is rhythm in his body, and music in his heart" (1945: xviii). The music of Spain, he continued, in a Nietzschean vein, had been influenced by the "Moors from Africa." Indigenizing *Carmen* in the United States meant changing genres—from elitist European opera to populist American musical. More surprisingly, in this case it meant changing race, for not only was this Carmen African American, but the entire cast was as well. We need to remind ourselves that this was a time when the mainstream stage and screen were not necessarily open to black performers, though all-black theater for black audiences flourished. This adaptation was made before the Civil Rights movement, though after *Showboat* (1927) and *Porgy and Bess* (1935). On the other hand, what might have been even less acceptable at that moment than blacks on the American Broadway stage would have been the presentation of a mixed-race love relationship on stage—for that was what Carmen's story originally had been, in part, about.

As James Baldwin pointed out in his attack on the film version of *Carmen Jones*, making everyone black removed Carmen's otherness, as a gypsy among Spaniards, and placed the focus on sexual rather than racial politics. Yet Baldwin noted, it also managed to reinforce African American stereotypes of female promiscuity, male violence, rural ignorance, and athletic prowess (1955/1975: 91). Not only was this adaptation a translation—into what he called "Negro speech"—but it was also a transculturation at the same time. Carmen's famous Habañera became "Dat's Love": "If I love you dat's de end of you!" In the process, the flighty "oiseau rebelle" (rebellious bird) became the earthy "baby dat grows up wild." Although the operatic Carmen accepts her fate as she reads it in the cards, with an aria that opens "En vain" (in vain), the musical's heroine faces death boldly, calling it "dat ol' boy" and declaring defiantly that she wants to live life to the full "up to de day I

die." And she does. The racial politics become even more complicated, however, because Dorothy Dandridge's singing voice belongs to a white mezzo-soprano, the young Marilyn Horne.

Not only the language is transformed in this adaptation, however. *Carmen Jones* is reset during the Second World War in the southern United States. The soldier Don José becomes Joe, a serviceman who wants to be a pilot; this Carmen works making parachutes, not cigars or cigarettes. The toreador Escamillo translates as Husky Miller, boxing champion; Lillas Pastia's gypsy cabaret is transformed into Billy Pastor's juke joint. When Joe goes AWOL, he hides in a Chicago hotel room as Carmen goes out to the pawn shop to get money to support them; mad with jealousy, Joe feels emasculated and dependent, reflecting, it has been argued, "wartime and postwar anxieties about the decay of masculine power and authority when women are allowed to work" (Leicester 1994: 250). In Americanizing and updating the story of Carmen, *Carmen Jones* indigenizes it in radical ways. Although Bizet's family felt the adaptation was irreverent and managed to get it banned in France (Collier 1994: 1), it likely would not have spoken to a European audience at any rate, or at least not in the same way as it did to Americans in the middle of the twentieth century. When Joe sings at the end, after murdering Carmen, "String me high on a tree / so that soon I'll be / with my darling, my baby, my Carmen," the inevitable echoes of lynchings and other forms of racial violence would have resonated with the U.S. audience.

Because of its gypsy protagonist, then, *Carmen* is an opera that has frequently attracted racialized adaptations, even if not this extreme. In 2000, director Mark Dornford-May and conductor Charles Hazlewood first presented their pared-down version of the opera's story at the South African Academy of Performing Arts in Cape Town. Set totally among the gypsies of Seville this time, it was updated to the 1970s, but the dialogue was in the Xhosa language and the singing in English (in Rory Bremner's translation). Using both amateur and professional black performers and a small stage band, the production was praised for its energy, its earthiness, and thus its assumed proximity to the spirit that Bizet was trying to capture with his music (see, e.g., P. Citron 2002: R3). A film version, *U-Carmen e-Khayelitsha*, again in Xhosa, is set this time in a modern-day South African township with its particular issues and problems (e.g., smuggling is transculturated into drug trafficking). This film opened first in the township in which it was filmed before going on to win the Golden Bear Award at the 2005 Berlin International Film Festival.

The 2001 film *Karmen Geï* similarly retains the opera's basic plot, but this version chooses to forego Bizet's score in favor of indigenous Senegalese music and choreography. Here, the toreador Escamillo becomes the singer-bard Massigi. Director Joseph Gaï Ramaka moves to this particular African urban environment the theme of "love and freedom" or the conflict between that freedom and the laws and conventions that inevitably constrain that desire (as he explains at http://www.newsreel.org/films/karmen.htm). Freedom necessarily has a political dimension in this African context, and the film opens in a women's prison. But Ramaka changes the sexual politics (Karmen is bisexual) more radically than he does the racial politics. And in this realistic film, almost all singing is "motivated" as "phenomenal song": that is, it is part of a performed show or is done in a club. The exception is Karmen's seductive Habañera, which is sung twice only to Lamine/Don José—when she first seduces him and just before he kills her. Here the words from the opera are pointedly translated into the African language, not the French of some of the dialogue. As in *Carmen Jones*, the whole cast is black, so racial distinctions and conflicts that exist in the opera are not replicated here either.

These various indigenizings, with their all-black casting, are appropriations that in effect deracialize some of the opera's tensions. But changes in time and place have other political repercussions. MTV's 2001 *Carmen: A Hip-Hopera* is as much an adaptation of *Carmen Jones* as of *Carmen*. With a mostly black cast (Carmen is played by Beyoncé Knowles of the pop band Destiny's Child) and a black director (Robert Townsend), this adaptation uses bits of Bizet's score, but mostly creates new rap music to update the story to modern-day inner-city Philadelphia and Los Angeles. The cultural heroes are not toreadors here, but rap singers; this modern Carmen has an ambition—to be an actor.

Interestingly, unlike these versions, even some of the most benign of Hollywood's *Carmen* adaptations to film over the years retain some

sense of racial or ethnic difference within the plot. Carmen was often played by stars who were or seemed exotically ethnic—Theda Bara, Pola Negri, Dolores del Rio, and Rita Hayworth. Some were sinister; others were sultry. But all were different in some way, and all were versions of the *femme fatale*. On the contrary, the other side of the stereotype, the defiant and liberated woman, has been celebrated and appropriated by performers like Madonna and Nina Hagen with rather different gender politics in mind.

Embodyings/Disembodyings Almost all adaptations of the Carmen story—no matter what the medium—inevitably focus on her singing and dancing body. So it is not surprising that the dance stage should have become a site of choice for adaptations. In 1967 the Soviet composer Rodion Shchedrin reworked and reassembled Bizet's themes into a modernist, almost abstract narrative for his wife, Maya Plisetskaya, the grand ballerina of the Bolshoi Ballet. Though this Carmen negotiates her fate in a symbolic bullring, she is curiously disembodied through her translation into the body language and gestural conventions of classical ballet. In contrast, Roland Petit's earlier (1949) version returned Carmen and *Carmen* to their French roots, but updated both in the sense that realism and eroticism now replaced exoticism. This Carmen is not racially different: she is simply beautiful and sexy. The lovers' choreographed interactions are decidedly risqué for the time. What the adaptation gains in erotic energy, however, it loses in psychological motivation: bodies cannot convey inner worlds as well as words can. We only know characters in dance by their movement and their music. Interestingly, this ballet version reassigns and thus refocuses the music, giving Don José the fate theme that is Carmen's in the opera and letting him dance a solo to her "Habañera"; Carmen dies to the strains of her earlier seduction ("Je vais danser en votre honneur"), kissing her murderer. French audiences would likely have noticed these deliberate transgressions, even if they might not have noticed the excision of most of Carmen's chromatic and orientalized music. This Carmen is differently embodied, but still very much controlled by the classical ballet movements, as she is given no distinctive dance steps of her own (see Collier 1994: 94).

Matthew Bourne's "auto-erotic thriller" *The Car Man* (2001) took the embodied and sexualized body of the Carmen of the opera and divided her into a male character (Luca) and a female (Lana), both of whom seduce the Don José character (Angelo). Seville has here been transformed into Harmony, U.S.A. in the 1950s; the tobacco factory becomes an auto repair shop and a diner. *Carmen*'s sex outside of marriage may have been shocking to the 1875 bourgeois audience at the Opéra Comique in Paris, but today (or even in the 1950s?) the drifter Luca may well have to be bisexual (as he is) to get anything like the same transgressive thrill from a ballet audience.

The best-known dance adaptation-embodiment of Carmen is likely Spanish director Carlos Saura's hispanizing and "gypsifying" flamenco dance film of 1983. The late Antonio Gades choreographed and starred as Antonio in Saura's self-reflexive film about a choreographer seeking the perfect Carmen for his flamenco version of Mérimée's story. (Gades had already produced a ballet of Act II of the opera before working on the film, and afterward, he put together a suite of the dances created for the movie and toured with that show.) The film traces the development of the dance version in workshop, but we soon realize that the plot of *Carmen* is being acted out by the dancers not only on stage but also off stage. The film's most gripping moments occur when the audience cannot tell in which narrative frame the action is taking place. French critics lamented this dispersion of the narrative over two parallel plot lines: this was not *their Carmen* (see Bertrand 1983: 106). And they were right; it isn't their *Carmen* at all.

Bizet's music is present here, reworked and reinterpreted, but it is displaced from the center by music composed and played in the film by the flamenco guitarist, Paco de Lucia. Yet the operatic music reappears whenever Antonio is obsessed with the mythic creature that is Carmen. The real woman he casts is not initially a particularly good dancer, nor is she really interested in the role. In this version, she is not so much a dangerous and conniving *femme fatale* as an indifferent, sexually liberated woman. But that change determines her final fate, as she is stabbed to the rhythm of the music of the end of the opera. The real woman is as far from Antonio's obsession/illusion as Bizet's French-exotic "Spanish" music is from Spain's actual ethnic music:

as Paco points out in the film, it is impossible to dance flamenco to Carmen's "Seguidilla" until he changes the rhythm, improvising on its themes on his guitar. Yet, the often violent, always confrontational flamenco scenes could also be said to reinscribe the opera's French clichés of Spanishness: jealousy, passion, male honor, aggressive violence, and revenge. These may be somewhat different images than those offered by the French exoticism of the Gustave Doré engravings of Spain that we see Antonio examining at the start of the film, but clichés they potentially remain nonetheless.

Yet Spanish critics saw the film as removing the French excrescences from an essentially Spanish character and making dance the perfect articulation of Carmen's passion (see Bertrand 1983: 106). It may be no accident that the year 1983 saw Spain enter the European Community, moving from its exoticized nineteenth-century role as alien to becoming an integral part of European culture. José Colmeiro has recently argued that Spain internalized the French or European orientalized image of itself, but reappropriated it (or indigenized it, in my terms) for the purposes of national identification. Like the gypsy in Spain, Spain in Europe could be seen as the internal other.

Of course, the renewal of interest in adapting Carmen's story in the 1980s was in large part the result of the fortuitous end of Bizet's copyright, but it may well also have had something to do with this context of European identity-seeking, as has been suggested (Gould 1996: 13). Yet Carmen's story has traveled widely and has therefore been indigenized ever since it was first *told* and, even more importantly, first *shown* in performance. When this narrative changes context—of time or place—it is both different and the same. Recognizably either the *femme fatale* or the liberated woman or sometimes both, Carmen is created again, but created anew each time. Her doubled stereotypical identification likely contributes to the ubiquity and power of her story—and its ability to survive major shifts in gender, ethnic, and racial politics. But it is also likely true that we cannot experience any adaptation of Carmen's story today without seeing it through the lenses of such contemporary themes as violence to women and ethnic or racial "othering." Evolutionary psychologists might be right that there is something biological about stories of male jealousy in terms of the theory of sexual

competition (Barash and Barash 2005: 14–37), but responses to these stories are culture-specific.

That is why this particular story has changed over time and with new contexts. To return to a different use of a biological analogy, the one I began to develop at the end of Chapter 1, perhaps traveling stories can be thought of in terms of cultural selection. Like evolutionary natural selection, cultural selection is a way to account for the adaptive organization, in this case, of narratives. Like living beings, stories that adapt better than others (through mutation) to an environment survive: those of Carmen, Don Juan, Don Quijote, Robinson Crusoe, Dracula, Hamlet, and so on. In Richard Dawkins' terms, "some memes are more successful in the meme-pool than others" (1976/1989: 194). Though he is thinking of memes (his cultural parallel to genes) as ideas, I argue in the first chapter that stories qualify as well. If so, his list of the three qualities needed for high survival value is of interest to a theory of cultural adaptation. The first is clearly longevity, though it is the least significant; what is more important is fecundity. For adaptations, the sheer number of them or the proven appeal across cultures might qualify as evidence of this quality. The third is "copying-fidelity" (194), but even Dawkins admits that in a cultural context copying means changing with each repetition, whether deliberate or not (194–95). For an adaptation to be experienced *as an adaptation*, recognition of the story has to be possible: some copying-fidelity is needed, in fact, precisely because of the changes across media and contexts.

Natural selection is both conservative and dynamic; it involves both stabilizing and mutating. In short, it is all about propagating genes into future generations, identical in part, yet different. So too with cultural selection in the form of narrative adaptation—defined as theme and variation, repetition with modification. Also significant for the cultural adaptation of stories is the fact that "[s]election favours memes that exploit their cultural environment to their own advantage" (199). Each newly indigenized version of a story competes—as do genes—but this time for audience attention, for time on radio or television or for space on bookshelves. But each adapts to its new environment and exploits it, and the story lives on, through its "offspring"—the same and yet not.