

II. Theatre and Drama Studies Conference

ADAPTATION, APPROPRIATION, TRANSLATION

8-10 December 2023

Online

Organised by



Extended Deadline for Paper Proposals:
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In her work, *A Theory of Adaptation*, Linda Hutcheon describes the term “adaptation” as “[a]n acknowledged transposition of a recognisable other work or works” (2016, p. 8), pointing out that adaptations attract the audience by arousing pleasure and encouraging a reevaluation. One can easily perceive and interpret the original literary work’s intricate relationship with its adaptation through his/her experience and knowledge of the earlier. Adaptations are relished as they revive recognised narratives and stories in a new format, genre and medium. However, “the adaption is not an act of sly plagiarism; it is a deliberate and self-conscious attempt to engage with an original text and offer a new approach or direction. Another attraction of adaptation is the opportunity it offers for presenting texts in a new context” (Rees, 2017, p. 3). Particularly, postmodernism laid the necessary theoretical and cultural foundation for adaptations, revisions and other forms of reworkings by turning them into common practices. As Hutcheon puts it, “We postmoderns have clearly inherited this same habit, but we have even more new materials at our disposal” (2006, p. xi). Yet, this literary inheritance is problematic and controversial because an adaptation is often outshined by the source text, accused of unoriginality or biased by readers, audiences or critics.

Another issue that arises regarding adaptation is the controversy over its literary/cultural value and the ideological transformations they undergo in the rewriting phase. In *Adaptation and Appropriation*, Sanders (2006) asserts that “a political or ethical commitment shapes a writer's, director's, or performer's decision to re-interpret a source text” (p. 2). An assessment of the derivative work’s value “requires prior knowledge of the text(s) being assimilated, absorbed, reworked, and refashioned by the adaptive process” (2006, p. 120). In this respect, an adaptation can be thought of as a product of new literary, cultural and political events and developments. An analysis of the adaptation entails the careful consideration of the constant and palimpsestuous practices, in which multi-referential and multi-textual elements form different layers of meaning. New texts, accordingly, start to speak with source texts, adapted environment and their own constructions. Julia Kristeva asserts “a permutation of texts, an intertextuality; in the space of a given text, several utterances, taken from other texts, intersect and neutralize each other” (1980). This neutralization molds clay into a new piece, turning literary text into an incessantly self-referential and re-forming art.

Two terms, adaptation and appropriation, have often generated conflicting definitions and delineations as the relationship between them is overlapping and multi-layered. Sanders proposes some necessary clues for the points of divergence. She states that “[a]ppropriation frequently affects a more decisive journey away from the informing text into a wholly new cultural product and domain, often through the actions of interpolation and critique as much as through the movement from one genre to others” (2006, p. 35). That is, appropriation can be more creative and divergent by obfuscating or breaking off the organic link with the source. “Appropriation [hence] clearly extends far beyond the adaptation of other texts into new literary creations, assimilating both historical lives and events” (Sanders, p. 148). Still, both adaptations and appropriations can have incongruities with the texts to which they are attached. The audience and readers oscillate between the existing source and new variants, and they often tend to recognise or explore the various layers of overlaps, parallels and deviations. Transferring and translating the original text’s culture, history, and characters to the audience or reader is a serious work, thus it is necessary to have an awareness of both cultures, languages, texts, and historical periods. Translators, whether intentionally or unintentionally, are obliged to perform an adaptational practice by taking the cultural

distinctions and contextual specificities of the original and the translated work into consideration. There are times when an adaptive translation is only possible through cultural and geographical transfer. That is, in many cases, a successful translation is also a good adaptation.

Literary history is a realm of adaptations. “English Drama has evolved around the adaptation of historical texts-often in the context of so-called verbatim plays and the tradition of documentary drama-the staging of historical events ... Also, historical personae have been adapted to the stage in the successful sub-genre of the bio-play, from Howard Brenton’s take on Percy Shelley (*Bloody Poetry*, 1984) or Harold Macmillan (*Never So Good*, 2008)” (Franger and Virchow, 2009, p. 4). In the fields of drama and theatre, adapting or appropriating Shakespeare’s masterpieces has also been a tremendously popular choice for ages. Contemporary plays such as David Greig's *Dunsinane* (2010) and Tim Crouch's *I, Shakespeare* (2012), in which minor characters are foregrounded and reconstructed in new plots and temporalities, provide the audience with a new experience of the Shakespearean world in contemporary settings. In the same fashion, the adaptations and translations of Bertolt Brecht’s dramatic and critical works by David Hare and David Edgar along with Howard Brenton offer a fruitful premise for researchers. Contemporary theatre and film have long been enchanted by eighteenth and nineteenth-century British literature, new histories and historiographies of which have found a safer place in popular culture and mainstream theatre. Jane Austen’s *Emma*, Lewis Carroll’s *Alice in Wonderland*, Charles Dickens’s *A Christmas Carol*, *Great Expectations* or *A Tale of Two Cities*, Emily Brontë’s *Wuthering Heights*, Arthur Conan Doyle’s *Sherlock Holmes* and Bram Stoker’s *Dracula* are only a few that deserve a mention in this CFP.

In light of the above introduction, this conference aims to attract papers investigating the functions, possibilities, limits and strategies of adaptation/appropriation/translation within theatre/film/media/literary studies. The list below summarises some suggested topics and areas of study for prospective papers, though, this is a non-exhaustive list and new suggestions are welcome.

- Adaptation and the concepts of the original
- Approaches to and perspectives on adaptation, appropriation, translation and cultural/literary appropriation
- Adaptation, appropriation and translation in theatre/performance
- Adaptation, appropriation and translation in Film, Media and Performance Studies
- History and Historiography as dramatic adaptation
- Translation and cultural transfer in drama and theatre
- Cross-cultural theories of adaptation: different significances of the term ‘adaptation’ in different cultures
- Adaptation as a form of cultural/literary (re)negotiation
- Adaptation, transmediality, intermediality, intermodality and screened performance
- Translation, adaptation, and digital media
- Appropriating biography
- Aesthetics and politics in transtextual/transgeneric adaptation
- Adaptation, intertextuality and (re)defining adaptation studies
- Worldwide Shakespeares and local appropriations

- Reproducing and adapting Shakespeare in the 21st century
- The impact of theoretical/literary movements including modernism, poststructuralism, postcolonialism, postmodernism, feminism, queer studies or post-theories on adaptation and adaptation studies
- Memories in and of adaptations: memorializing, invoking or calling back through adaptations
- Cultural diversity and inclusiveness in theatre and adaptation studies
- Adaptation and re-locating narratives, untold stories, and relived memories
- Appropriations, political interventions, creative subversions, and conversations
- (Re)narrating the past as an ethical decision
- Ecological/Ecocritical/Posthuman adaptation and appropriation

We are delighted to announce that the confirmed keynote speakers of our conference are:

Aleks Sierz (Journalist, Author and Theatre Critic)

Dr Catherine Rees (Loughborough University, UK)

Prof Benjamin Poore (University of York, UK)

Prof Julie Sanders (Royal Holloway University, UK)

Please send your proposal (up to 300 words) for a 20-minute presentation with a short bio including your name, academic background, affiliation, research interests and contact information by 30 October 2023 to: theatredramanetwork@gmail.com