

**The English Novel: Interdisciplinary Approaches**  
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**Lecture - 5**  
**Adaptation**

Hello student, I am Professor Smita Jha and I am here to discuss The topic today, that is 'adaptation' with the broad topic of reading the English novel: an interdisciplinary approach. Well, the topic adaptation is very important because when we read a novel, how we take the novel, the textual analysis we do, that is very important. The writer writes in his own way or with his own or her perspective. But readers may have his or her own perspective, mode of analysis, way of analysis and also understanding.

So first let us see what is adaptation. An adaptation is the translation of a literary work. We say in plain words like a poem, novel, short story, or play into another genre like a musical, film, television series or a play. How we read a poem and then interpret the meaning. Even the symbols, and the images. That is very important while analyzing the text on the page. Some of the earliest adaptations were based on the stories of Brothers Grimm like *Cinderella*.

Other early adaptations include examples of Arthur Conan Doyle's *Sherlock Holmes* series, Jules Verne's *From the Earth to the Moon*, and *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. What my point is that adaptation is not a new word. Adaptation was there in the ancient age also. The bulk of literary works that are adapted are made into films.

Because in the present scenario, when we talk of adaptation, you know, the very concept of media comes to our mind. These range in success and viewership as well as in critical reviews. Some novels make great films. Consider *The Lord of the Rings* novels, while others like *Wuthering Heights* don't do quite as well when moved into visual form.

We have to see a number of factors when we talk of adaptation. So, an adaptation is the recreation of a piece of art, literature or film by using the same concept, but changing certain aspects such as the setting or the characters, plot, atmosphere. These factors are very important while analyzing a text. Whatever the mode of the text, the appearance of the text, the process of recreating and presenting an existing work in a way which draws a new meaning and context. In short, I think an adaptation is any work that is based on or sourced from another work and has the purpose of said work in some form. One should

be able to tell the source; but it should be a remix or a new edition of it. An adaptation is new story or a retelling of an old story in a new media form that is based on an already existing work.

Adaptations include intertextuality. Well, this is a very important point – intertextuality - especially in humanities or in any other discipline. Intertextuality from the previous work or the use of elements from the original work in the new work or work that retells the old story, adaptations are used to creatively expand from the original idea in a new way. And the three criteria of being an adaptation that Linda Hutcheon mentioned are very, very interesting.

We all know about Linda Hutcheon. She is the pioneer in the area of adaptation, especially the media study. For Hutcheon, adaptations are inter-creative and creative acts that retain the aura of the adapted text and contain within them a “palimpsestic doubleness”. They are deliberate, announced and extended revisitations of prior works, not replications or reproductions, but rather repetitions with variations. Embracing the post-structuralist redefinition of textuality that insists on the intimate interpretation of the adapted text and the adaptation, she refuses to prioritize an 'original' and resists the hierarchizing of genre and media.

In addition, the motives of adaptation are complex and the pleasures of its reception many. Hutcheon therefore insists upon considering adaptations as adaptations, an italicized phrase that frequently recurs, even though those unfamiliar with or unable to recognize the adapted text in the adaptation can still appreciate the adaptation as an autonomous work. Well, we may talk about another important theory in adaptation.

Studies in André Lefevere's concept of 'rewriting'. According to Lefevere, a film adaptation is not a one-to-one translation of the source text, but rather a rewriting that involves the convergence of the adapter's readings and impressions before the source text, resulting in a new version of their story. And this is very important. See, more or less the same. But, it (Lefevere's) is about rewriting, and she talks about - Hutcheon - retelling, that is, repetition. This theory is particularly relevant when examining the adaptation of Shakespeare's plays into cinema as it highlights the creative choices and interpretations made by filmmakers to reimagine and reinterpret Shakespearean text for a contemporary audience. Thomas Leitch's critique of adaptation theory also sheds light on the fallacies that can mislead our understanding of the adaptation process. In *A Theory of Adaptation* Linda Hutcheon posits a theory of analyzing "adaptations as adaptations" that provides an

answer to the question: how can adaptations be theorized without resorting to fidelity discourse? Because discussing fidelity when discussing adaptation is very, very important. And we should know how Linda Hutcheon defines fidelity in our discussion. Although many experienced scholars in the field of adaptation studies have moved beyond the temptations to simply discuss whether an adaptation is faithful to its source text.

Hutcheon's book provides a reason to value adaptations as cultural artifacts - an easily digestible definition of adaptation that eliminates complexities from its purview and a holistic theory of analyzing adaptation. Well, storytelling allows for the sharing of ideas and the teaching of ideas across cultures. Common themes can be communicated to several audience through cultural traditions that both show through theater, film, television, and tell through novels, books, radio, human values. And this is one of the important aspects while discussing adaptation. Many of these stories and lessons have been told and told again yet they continue to find a place in our cultural landscape.

This occurs through the unique process of adaptation. Adaptation is not a new practice. Authors, playwrights, directors, composers, choreographers and designers have been adapting material since civilizations arose. And that is why I said that this is not a new phenomenon. That, adaptation and its very similitude, that is, authenticity is very, very important.

But this doesn't mean considering this practice in our own current culture would not reveal new information. Perhaps one of the biggest questions surrounding adaptations is how does an adaptation become topical in current circumstances. Are there things that are not adaptable? And who gets to decide? While the first definition refers to the world's history as a scientific term, the second reflects the beginning of its uses in reference to the humanities. It was not until 1860 that adaptation was used as we think of it today.

An altered or amended version of a text, musical composition and alike. One adapted for filming, broadcasting, production on the stage from a novel or similar literary source. These definitions are not mutually exclusive. Adapters, whether filmmakers, theatre directors or authors, still alter a work for a particular end or purpose, usually to suit specified conditions, especially a new or changed environment.

In 1957, George Bluestone, another pioneer in the area of adaptation theory, wrote an influential analysis of screenwriters' adaptation processes in novels into films. Since then, scholars have measured adaptations against their source text, often privileging original

text or regarding adaptation as derivative. However, this attitude began to shift as the field emerged. In 1996, Brian McFarlane argued that loyalty to the source text takes away from other elements of the film's intertextuality. And here is the question of infidelity or fidelity.

A film is never just based on one source text. Other circumstances such as popular culture and social climate affect the making of a film. And that is very true because I have seen the interview of various producers, directors who were saying that there are need of changes in the movie taken from the text, source taken from the text. And they explained it, justified it as a need and the demand of the art. Need of the hour, need of the art.

So, some were changes required inevitably. Similarly, Deborah Cartmell and Imelda Whelehan note that scholars in literary studies usually prefer the original text and the original text bias skews analysis of adaptations. They argue that using the original text to evaluate adaptations in another form of media homogenizes the identities and desires of both film and fiction consumers who experience narrative pleasure differently. The adaptation of literary works into film has been almost completely neglected as a philosophical topic. Two questions should be analyzed about the phenomenon.

First, what do we mean when we say that a film is faithful to its source? And that is why I use the word verisimilitude because generally we use this word in the act of translation. Second, is being faithful to its source a merit in a film adaptation? In response to one, there could be two distinct sense of fidelity, story fidelity and thematic fidelity. Like in 'Life of Pi', the text and the movie at several places, you know, it was different.

Maybe the demand, the need of the hour or the situation in response to two, question number two, that 'thematic fidelity' but not 'story fidelity' is an aesthetic merit in a film adaptation. The key steps in this argument involve showing that merely preserving the story from one medium to another doesn't typically involve an aesthetically significant accomplishment, whereas reserving a theme across different media does. Relatively little has been written on the topic of adaptation in anglophone aesthetics.

This is surprising. After all, adaptation is a dominant cultural phenomenon. Most films are based on pre-existing sources and one with a long and rich history. Short stories are adapted into plays, plays into films, films into operas, songs into poems, and on and on, backwards and forwards. More significantly, adaptation poses important and interesting philosophical problems that bear on and interact with some of the most discussed problems in philosophical aesthetics today. There is, however, a large and vibrant

literature on the topic of adaptation outside the field of philosophy with dozens of books, thousands of articles, two academic journals dedicated to the field of adaptation studies, namely *Adaptation*, the *Journal of Literature on Screen Studies* and *Film Literature Quarterly*. I am myself floating a subject called 'Film and Literature'. And basically, this subject is based on the adaptation theory: movie based on the novel. And these two journals are very, very important, useful while discussing adaptation theories. The issue of fidelity is a complex one and it encourages filmmakers to see it as a desirable goal in the adaptation of literary work.

Some writers have proposed strategies who seek to categorise adaptation so that fidelity to the original loses some of its privileged position. Geoffrey Wagner suggests three possible categories. First, and this is very important, and we need to know, that is why I mentioned this. First, 'transposition' in which novel is given directly on the screen with a minimum of apparent interference. Second, 'commentary' where the original is taken and either purposely or inadvertently altered in some respect when there has been a different intention on the part of the filmmaker rather than infidelity or outright violation. Third, 'analogy' which must represent a fairly considerable departure for the sake of making another work of art. Dudley Andrew, well, another important name, if we discuss adaptation theories. One of the pioneers, also reduces the modes of relation between the film and its source novel to three categories: 'borrowing', 'intersection' and 'fidelity of transformation'. The starting point for adapting a textual story to film is determining how faithful the adaptation will be to the original in order to map out the part of its creation.

Well, fidelity criticism provides a glimpse of the differences and equivalences present in the adaptations. But it is difficult to fall in line with fidelity criticism's emphasis that a film adaptation must participate within a completely faithful depiction of an original work. The spirit and aura of the original work must be preserved, but the study of such adaptation should not rely on recounting the differences without notating the intertextuality between the works.

And here I wrap up my discussion on adaptation, where I would advise the student that you must read these theorists I mentioned in my lecture. And I'm sure that you will get some of the ideas of adaptation or film and literature adapted version.

Thank you very much. We are meeting in the next lecture.