Why is Disney So Popular – Margarita Ronnberg

Multimodality – can be defined as the system that delivers the same message through multiple media.

Adult and children’s views are opposite

- Children need immediate experiences.

- Popularity came by:

1. animated medium – unreality

2. emotional impact

3. humorous minor characters and physically expressed comedy (p.s. a facial expression)

4. Character taken as local ones

5. Good music

6. Good intuition (interest its children is psychology)

7. Topic – how to solve a problem by yourself

8. Children – competent for life

9. Stories – optimism “cheerfulness and happy ending”.

Unpopularity comes from - reasons (unpopulous)

1. The Disney dominance – dangerous leads to uniformity, monopolism, colonization

2. Merchandising – unconscious pressure of parents to buy toys

3. “Densification”- the company “purities” the world from everything problematic.

4. Racism

Disney Films adaptations are a source of support for children self-realization.

Fairy tales and film/animated adaptation.

Basic questions:

1. What traits quality a story to be placed under the genre of Fairy tale?

2. What changes were made from the original text to the modification?

3. Which version or point of view is the audience most drawn and why?

Originally, fairy tales were a sub-class of a folk-tale and were not seen as their own specific genre (German “Marchen – “little story). Told by personal storytellers, they existed for centuries as adult amusement.

A fairy tale acts as a balance – it mediates between the life we have and the life we want; between the world we inherit and the word we imagine. It is a family drama in which characters, by meaning of series of transformations discover their true selves.

Today’s children don’t question what they see. They just assume that what is visually in front of them is the only and accurate interpretation of the information. We must teach children how to be good interpreters of information.

FOLK TALES AND FAIRY TALES

The term *fairy tale* may have two origins. One source may be the German term *Volksmarchen* (folk tale), the other is, according to Jack Zipes, the French term *conte’de fees* (tales of the Fairies). The second term appeared in 1698 as a tittle of a collection of stories by Countess D’Aulnoy and can be applied to Brother Grimm’s tales. Fairy tales refer to the literary production of adapted tales by writers that belonged to the middle-class or aristocracy in the XVII and XVIII centuries, such as Charles Perrault or Madame de Beumont, whose writings were addressed to the educated public. This transformed the folk tale into a fairy tales.

Thus, the folk tale is a part of an oral tradition, whereas the fairy tale was coined by the middle class and denoted the coming of a new form of literature which took advantage of and took elements from the folk tale.

Originally, the folkloric tale was a narrative created by common people to express the way in which they perceived nature and social order. Hence, events present in these tales include cannibalism, human sacrifices, and many other cruel social events, which only lower classes could accept as utopia of a better life. Fairy tales are related to aristocracy and reflect a change in values and ideological conflicts.

There are endless ways in which these fairy tales are transmitted in the cultural industry. As literary texts, plays, publicity or television shows, but their adaptations as films is one of the most important ways.

Today’s fairy tale public has become passive and it could be pointed out that the voice of the narrator is led by commercial interest.

- Transition of tales from the oral tradition to the big screen is complex. As for methodological approach we will focus on structuralism and the work of Jack Zipes.

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? Although many experienced scholars in the field of adaptation studies have moved beyond the temptation to simply discuss whether an adaptation is faithful to its source text, newcomers to the field may still need to learn how to analyze an adaptation without giving in to this same temptation. For these newcomers, 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 adaptations. Students entering the discourse that have been trained to value “original versions” and may be inclined to biased analyses of adaptations should find Hutcheon’s theory helpful as an introduction to adaptation studies. Hutcheon rejects fidelity discourse as a method of discussing adaptations because it creates a false hierarchy—the adaptation becomes secondary to the original. The result of seeing adaptations in this manner is that they are not given credit as original art forms. Although adaptations are “derived from” other texts, they are not “derivative” or of lesser value; rather than using hierarchical terms like “original” or “source,” Hutcheon suggests the term “adapted text” to refer to the text/s that an adaptation is drawing upon. For Hutcheon, adaptations are “palimpsestic,” i.e. stories that have changed over time, and that show evidence of change. They are repetitions of a familiar story, but not replications. Hutcheon suggests that the value of adaptations is that they can be analyzed as stories that are repeated in a particular culture for a reason. By looking at the ways stories evolve over time, scholars can determine the values and ideologies of that culture, making them worthy of analysis. Although those who have long been interested in cultural studies may not need a defense of these forms of artistic production, Hutcheon’s defense may help convince those who tend to overlook adaptations as “lower” cultural forms to see their intellectual value.

Adaptation Defined

Hutcheon’s definition of “adaptation” includes diverse forms. Songs, video games, films, books can be adaptations; but, they must meet three criteria cmpletely. First, an adaptation is an “acknowledged transposition of a recognizable other work or works” (35). A work that does not acknowledge that it is an adaptation of other texts would not be “adaptation.” Although Hutcheon does not directly say so, it seems that she views unacknowledged repetitions of a story as non-creative, or perhaps unintentional or even malicious appropriation.

Second, in order to be an adaptation a story must also be a “creative and interpretive act of appropriation/salvaging” (35). Unlike the use of “appropriation” above, Hutcheon refers to the act of borrowing from other texts in order to make a new text for a new reason. “Salvaging” refers to the act of saving an old text from being forgotten, or paying homage to a previous text. Finally, an adaptation must be an “extended intertextual engagement with the adapted work” (35). Using or borrowing from stories in passing seems to be allusion rather than true adaptation. Hutcheon’s definition of “adaptation” can be considered limiting (even a bit simplistic) by scholars familiar with adaptation studies. However, the narrowness of the definition is precisely what makes it suitable for new students in the field.

Methodology

For Hutcheon, learning to look at adaptations with “double vision,” i.e. learning to think of them as product and process simultaneously, makes it possible to analyze adaptations beyond fidelity discourse. When viewed with “double vision,” adaptations become like a situation or event that journalists report on: in order to understand the situation (the adaptation itself), one must ask about the people involved in making it happen (the adapters), and those who experience it (the audience). Using the theoretical work of Derrida, Foucault, Kristeva, Bahktin, Iser, Aristotle, and others, Hutcheon argues that adaptations can best be analyzed by using the journalistic method of inquiry: asking what, who, why, how, where, and when.

“What” means looking at what form an adaptation is in—different media forms have different methods of conveying meaning to an audience. By asking “What,” one can analyze the manner that messages are conveyed in particular adaptations.

“Who” and “Why” mean looking at the adapters—the author of an adaptation, like the author of the adapted text, is creating a work of art that is meant to convey a message to those who consume it. Understanding the adapter’s motivation opens up new space for analysis—by asking “why” scholars can discuss the economic lures of adapting, the legal constraints inherent in the process, and any personal or political messages that the adapter intended for the audience to see in his or her version of a familiar story, rather than simply discussing whether or not the adaptation is like the original.

“How” means looking at the audience and how they receive and interact with the adaptation as an adaptation. Audience members who are familiar with other versions of the story experience adaptations in dialogue with every version they remember. For Hutcheon, the pleasure of adaptations is in the experience of dialogue between versions and their different forms—repetition of a familiar story, but with variation. Asking “How” allows for analysis of the affect of forms on the “knowing” audience’s experience of the story. For example, novelizations of a familiar video game or movie story line may allow knowing audiences to “fill in the gaps” by providing further insight into character thoughts; likewise, films like Lord of the Rings may permanently change the knowing audience’s impression of the story by adding images and music.

“Where” and “When” mean looking at the context in which the adaptation was created and the context in which it was received. Adaptations exist in particular times, places, societies, and cultures. Stories like Carmen change in different contexts—in one time and place Carmen may be represented as a femme fatale victimizer in a story about ethnic otherness; in another, she may be represented as an admirably strong and independent woman in a story about sexual politics. What the story is fundamentally about changes with context. Asking these questions allows for analyses that include the cultural import of adaptations.

Modes of Engagement

In order to combine these journalistic questions into a method, Hutcheon focuses primarily on what she terms the Three Modes of Engagement (a variation of Iser’s reception theory) as a structural framework. The Modes of Engagement are the ways of presenting a story, and the corresponding ways the stories are received and experienced by the audience: Telling, Showing, and Interactive/Participatory.

The Telling mode of presenting a story involves the printed word—novels, etc. The audience engages with this mode by reading, and therefore receives and experiences the story with the eyes and imagination.

The Showing mode includes visual and aural story elements—anything with pictures or sound—movies, plays, operas, radio dramas, musicals, songs, comics, etc. The audience engages with this mode in a direct sensory manner by actually seeing and hearing the story.

The Participatory/Interactive mode involves the physical participation of the audience in the story being presented. Video games, board games, amusement parks, etc. all may present stories, but the audience is required to engage by physically moving in time and space in order to receive the story. All three modes involve an interrelationship between the creator/adapter of the story who chooses which mode (telling, showing, interactive) and medium (novel, opera, amusement park) of presentation to use, and the audience who engages with the story (by reading, seeing and hearing, or physically moving/acting).

Although much of this theoretical material is cursorily explained in the introduction and first chapter, the subsequent chapters break down each of the journalistic questions and their relationships to the modes of engagement in adaptations. Complete with extensive illustrative examples including things as diverse as Shakespeare’s plays, a historical account of the death of sixteen Carmelite nuns during the Reign of Terror in France that became novels, plays and films (*Dialogue Des Carmelites*), the James Bond and *Die Hard* video games, and the Barbie puppet opera *XXX\_LiveNude Girls*, readers can see Hutcheon’s theory at work in each chapter, making the book worthwhile introductory material for new students of adaptation studies.