How Adaptations Awaken the Literary Canon

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Transformative Reimaginings

By

Suzy Woltmann

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For Apollo, the brightest star in the sky.

Books always speak of other books, and every story tells a story that has already been told.
—Umberto Eco

Most everything is a knockoff of something else. Once you get the idea, everything you see, read, taste or smell becomes an allusion to it. It's the art of transforming things.
—Richard F. Thomas

One who really loves texts must wish from time to time to love (at least) two together.
—Gerard Genette

What's past is prologue.
—William Shakespeare

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INTRODUCTION

WHAT MAKES AN ADAPTATION TRANSFORMATIVE?

> Recognition and remembrance are part of the pleasure (and risk) of experiencing an adaptation; so too is change.[1]

Some stories stay ingrained in the literary imagination. These stories are shared time and again, subject to changed characters and altered plot points that still leave the narrative recognizable. From intertextual retellings to transmedia remixes to genre (and gender)-bending reboots, adaptations possess cultural capital rooted in the peculiar intersection of nostalgia and subversion. In this book, I contend that some literary reimaginings are *transformative*. I choose this term deliberately because I wish to differentiate these adaptations from those that simply alter mediums or retell a story for a contemporary audience. The term transformative indicates the ongoing process of these adaptations—that they alter something already written in a way that creates unlimited potentialities. Transformative reimaginings retroactively impact the fundamental nature of their source texts; and in doing so, they awaken the literary canon. Pushing back against the notion that the canon must be monolithic and that sociocultural knowledge is static, these adaptations inject new dialogical life into known narratives. Since a transformative reimagining critically evaluates its source text(s), analyzing and problematizing its tropes and authority by writing them anew, it becomes a form of literary criticism itself.

By encouraging readers to take a second look, and then a third, and a fourth, at any given text, adaptations create more possibilities for their authors, protagonists, readers, and the world. Generally, reading an adaptation necessitates thirst for knowledge about the recursive nature of art and literature. One must be interested in how literature (re)produces literature.[2] There is no origin and therefore no end to the adaptive process. Of course, just as no man is an island, no text is created in a vacuum. The danger of

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[1] Linda Hutcheon, *A Theory of Adaptation* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 4.
[2] Sanders, *Adaptation and Appropriation*, 15.

adaptations studies is that it may give way to a never-ended search for genealogy and intertextual reference points, or the "reproductive dimension of appropriation." [3] However, while keeping in mind the possibility of reductive and self-affirming literary practices, [4] theorizing adaptations produces powerful analyses that would be impossible without thinking of them *as adaptations*. Retelling known stories through different perspectives implies that fictional history is emplotted and that all narratives can and should be questioned. At the same time, adaptations create space for empowerment in the lives of characters who are marginalized in their source texts—usually because they are seen as Other, as predicated on their gender, sexual, and racial identities. Transformative reimaginings free these characters from the binds of their pretexts while simultaneously extending the legacy of these canonical pretexts. Instead of simply subverting the stories in their source texts, transformative texts open a world of potentiality by exposing gaps, silences, and oppression, and summoning the voices that might fill these spaces. Troubling the representation of identity and identity-based practices in canonical texts implies that citational practice can be fluid: nobody and no-thing—not even the canon—represents all knowledge.

Transformative reimaginings actively seek to reconceptualize representations of identity, gender, sexuality, race, and power present in canonical literature. Adaptations that transform their source texts through active revisionism may respond to a perceived lack of voice or agency for a marginalized character; subvert the narrative to expose oppressive forces, particularly sexist and racist apparatuses; or expand our understanding of what it means to be Other, even within a completely fantastical narrative. Adaptation-as-process (and therefore writing-as-process and reading-as-process) interrogates stereotypes and problematizes norms in source texts and encourages readers to engage in a similar process. Discovering new possibilities for a known narrative allows readers to reconceptualize and destabilize their own notions of individual truth. For example, reading a fairy tale adaptation with a queer protagonist may mean more to someone who is, themselves, a part of the queer community. Similarly, exploring a subverted colonizer/colonized relationship might encourage personal forms of empowerment for someone who has intimate experiences with colonization. This means that engaging with an adaptation often becomes a therapeutic experience.

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[3] Sanders, *Adaptation and Appropriation*, 15.

[4] Chapter 4 explores the possible consequences of this danger and the limits of adaptations studies.

Recent adaptations studies scholarship explores its cultural, historical, aesthetic, and political possibilities.[5] This epistemology engages explicitly with the creative capital of adaptation. In *A Theory of Adaptation*, Linda Hutcheon posits that much of the joy of reading an adaptation derives from "the pleasure of repetition with variation."[6] Historically, adaptations studies dealt with this juxtaposition through the lens of fidelity. A good adaptation, it was believed, paid homage to its textual benefactor by remaining true to it. Otherwise, it risked, as Virginia Woolf avowed, being deemed a "parasite" to its literary "prey."[7] The fidelity standard relies on the belief in literary hierarchies and subjugation to authority: if the adaptation does not submit to the authority of a source text, the work is found lacking. Since its early days of focusing on fidelity, however, adaptations studies has taken a turn to investigate instead the *stakes* of adaptation. Important questions include "how and to what uses" do adaptations function? And "what are the stakes, and for whom" of adapting a text?[8] The crux of adaptations studies lies within the process of adaptation itself—the what, who, why, how, where, and when, as well as the adaptive medium. By thinking about how texts are being adapted, for what purpose, and to what end, readers attain a more rewarding understanding of the significance of these adaptations. Much of this significance lies in shifting power dynamics and altered forms of hierarchy and subjugation. Transformative reimaginings modify these dynamics and respond to their source texts as well as the contemporaneous historical moment in a way that signifies yet updates older material. They (re)construe the meanings of gender, sexuality, and race to intertextually communicate with past texts, thus creating a dialogic, intertextual web of decentralized knowledge and awakening the canon. I argue that they do this through collaborative originality, intertextual queering, and perspective plurality: the ways transformative adaptations create something new through collective knowledge, alter other texts, and allow for a proliferation of voices.

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[5] See Hutcheon, *A Theory of Adaptation*; Sanders, *Adaptation and Appropriation*; Thomas Leitch, *Film Adaptation and Its Discontents* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007); Robert Stam, "Beyond Fidelity," *The Dialogics of Adaptation* (2000): 54–76; and Cristina Bacchilega, *Fairy Tales Transformed* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2013).

[6] Hutcheon, *A Theory of Adaptation*, 4.

[7] Woolf expresses her agitated interest in cinema as an art form that mimics other art forms. She further asks, "If it ceased to be a parasite, how would it walk erect?" See Virginia Woolf, "The Movies and Reality," *New Republic* 47 (1926): 309.

[8] Bacchilega, *Fairy Tales Transformed*, ix.

The significance of any given text—adaptation or not—lies within its ability to empower its readers by introducing them to new perspectives and ways of thinking. *Collaborative originality* is a revisionist process that encourages interactive readership. Collaborative originality is different from normative originality, which relies on independent creativity. Instead, collaborative originality is the collective process that creates something new out of previously known works. Theorists of adaptations studies argue that originality is founded in the new ways we approach known subjects and texts rather than in the nebulous quality of original production itself.[9] Authors of adaptations do not create original work completely anew; instead, they combine previous works in a newly original way. This pushes back against more traditional literary theory that highly values the originality of a text. When reading an adaptation, readers are comforted to recognize a story that they know, and simultaneously thrilled by the change. The most satisfying element of adaptations lies in the interplay between the known and unknown. The change means that adaptations do not lose the Benjaminian aura,[10] since they are not mere reproductions (4). Instead, the variation on form demonstrates an investment in transformation, which then encourages readers to invest themselves in the process as well. The very act of reading an adaptation causes readers to become re-writers; readers are aware of an adaptation's literary predecessors and so start to create connections through the process of reading. Roland Barthes calls engaged readers "writers of the text," which implies that reading is itself an act of re-writing.[11] Texts, particularly adaptations, encourage re-interpretation instead of simple passive reception. As Barthes and Julia Kristeva claim, there is no singular author—rather, any text is created through a combination of other texts, events, linguistic deviations, and so on.[12] This is further mirrored through Michel Foucault's take on authorship, which similarly argues for writing as its own good.[13] Literature itself is a kind of discourse, which means that text

[9] As early as 1919, T.S. Eliot questioned the "tendency to insist, when we praise a poet, upon those aspects of his work in which he least resembles anyone else." See T. S. Eliot, "Tradition and the Individual Talent," *Selected Prose of T. S. Eliot*, ed. Frank Kermode (London: Faber, 1984), 37.

[10] In "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," Walter Benjamin says that the aesthetic value of art, or its aura, is devalued through reproduction.

[11] Roland Barthes, *Mythologies* (New York: Noonday Press, 1972), 142.

[12] Barthes, *Mythologies*, 143.

[13] In "What is an Author?" Foucault notes that "we can easily imagine a culture where discourse would circulate without any need for an author." See Michel Foucault, "What is an Author?" in *Modernity and Its Discontents*, ed. Steven B. Smith (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016), 314.

is something that functions within a series of interweaving signs, a system of interpretation that functions in relation to itself.

It is more so the process of revisionism, rather than the product, that matters when it comes to the notion of originality. New modes of collaborative originality inherent in a recently highly technologically-connected world means that readers are even further removed from the notion of truly original creation and static meaning. T.S. Eliot and others have questioned the inclination to reject works that are seen as unoriginal because they are informed by other texts,[14] and Edward Said says that the writer should not be concerned with originality but rather with rewriting.[15] I extend this argument to show that the significance of an author's text comes from how the text encourages readers to reconsider their perspective. The meaning of the text is in its relation to the world rather than how it reads as an extension of the author. Since text represents a complex, dialogic plurality of interpretation, it encourages active reader response. By engaging with the text, readers (re)produce the meaning.

Transformative adaptations also engage interactive readership through *intertextual queering*, or the ways that they alter their source texts. All adaptations are inherently palimpsests, texts that bear the traces of other texts.[16] This means that other works are being intertextually hailed, and that the act of writing itself is metatextually established. When readers recognize a character, event, or trope in an adaptation, it encourages them to think about their interpretation of that figure based on previous knowledge. For example, discovering Antoinette's traumatic backstory in *Wide Sargasso Sea* asks readers to reconsider how her character is portrayed in *Jane Eyre*. The transformative adaptation intertextually communicates with its source text(s) and in doing so advocates for interactive readership. The term intertextuality is attributed to Julia Kristeva, who argues that texts are

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[14] Eliot says in "Tradition and the Individual Talent" that "no poet, no artist, of any art, has his complete meaning alone," See Eliot, "Tradition and the Individual Talent," 38.

[15] In "On Originality," Said says "the writer thinks less of writing originally, and more of rewriting." See Edward Said, "On Originality," *The World, the Text, and the Critic* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983), 135.

[16] In *Palimpsests: Literature in the Second Degree*, Gérard Genette distinguishes between five different types of transtextual relationships. Hypertextuality is the relationship between secondary text and the hypotext, or source text. Paratextuality is the relationship between the text and writing that surrounds the main body of the text (titles, footnotes, etc). Metatextuality is one text making critical commentary on another text. Architextuality is the relationship between a text and its genre. Finally, intertextuality is any relationship between texts. See Gérard Genette, *Palimpsest*s (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1997).

dynamic, active works that change meaning with each reading and therefore encourage interpretation instead of simply providing information.[17] Kristeva calls texts "mosaics" that rearrange pre-existing structures (66). Texts are not static constructions, but instead represent dynamic conflict and change between ideology and culture, author and readers. Adrienne Rich,[18] Harold Bloom,[19] Homi Bhabha,[20] and Henry Louis Gates, Jr.[21] establish that all writing is in some way informed by its literary predecessors. This contention is shared by Jacques Derrida, who finds that writing never refers to just one thing but rather an infinite web of influences.[22] This infinite web of hybridity encourages readers to produce meaning by making connections between texts. Contemporary adaptation theory builds on these past theories of intertextuality to argue for the importance of looking at the space between texts.

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[17] Kristeva's "Word, Dialogue and Novel" says that intertextuality is "a mosaic of quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another. The notion of *intertextuality* replaces that of intersubjectivity, and poetic language is read as at least *double.*" See "Word, Dialogue and Novel," in *The Kristeva Reader*, ed. Toril Moi (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986), 85.

[18] In "When We Dead Awaken: Writing as Re-vision," Rich notes that "we need to know the writing of the past and know it differently than we have ever known it; not to pass on a tradition but to break its hold over us." Adrienne Rich, "When We Dead Awaken," in *Feminisms: A Reader* (Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1992), 369.

[19] Bloom's *The Anxiety of Influence* discusses the overwhelming anxiety authors feel to be in thrall to the influence of past writers and their works. He argues that all writers in some way adapt or revise previous texts and compares this to the Oedipal complex to show how literary sons feel the need to battle their forefathers. See Harold Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973).

[20] Bhabha discusses the concept of hybridity to show that certain motifs are "repeated, relocated, and translated in the name of tradition." Homi K. Bhabha, "Cultural Diversity and Cultural Differences," *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader*, eds. Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin (London and New York: Routledge, 1995), 207.

[21] Gates, Jr. discusses the intersection of black vernacular and African-American literature to show how authors signify on black tradition and on each other's works. See the following chapter for a more in-depth discussion of Henry Louis Gates, Jr., *The Signifying Monkey*: *A Theory of African American Literary Criticism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

[22] Derrida says that "the desire to write is the desire to launch things that come back to you as much as possible." Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976), 157.

Through intertextual queering, transformative adaptations change the perception of source texts instead of simply repeating their narratives. The dynamic purpose of intertextuality is to create meaning; the adaptor salvages a past text in order to transform it into something new. Looking at adaptations intertextually, with double vision, allows readers to see the work and text, or process and product, at the same time. Readers view the source text and its implications at the same time as interpreting the adapted text, and in this liminal space the potency of adaptation explodes with meaning. Or as Sanders rephrases Hutcheon, the pleasure of the adaptation "exists, and persists, then, in the act of reading in, around, through and on (and on)."[23] Extending Stam's move away from the fidelity standard for adaptations studies, Leitch proposes that the most productive way of understanding adaptations is to focus on intertextuality and the process of adaptation itself: the ways that adaptations might extend, challenge, or explore ideas brought up in their source texts. Focusing on the value of the transformative process of adaptation itself creates space for the discovery of new ideas.

This process is especially potent in texts that intertextually queer their source texts. The transformative reimaginings addressed in this book queer their canonical source texts in two ways: 1) they portray non-normative genders and sexualities, and 2) they re-portray a known story in a topsy-turvy way (thereby queering the known tale). In doing so, these texts disrupt the patriarchal impulse of authoritative canonical texts. This process offers a "queer invitation" to investigate the liminal space between adaptations and source texts.[24] Transformative adaptations offer a queer invitation because they imply that there is not a single narrative truth but instead a web of dialogic sources that each have something to offer. This implication destabilizes the notion of an authoritative canon and opens both adaptations and sources to queer potentiality, or a disruptive force that pushes against normative readings and encourages alternative ways of understanding. Further than this methodological queerness, however, the texts I address in this book also all invite a queer intertextual reading because of their non-normative representations of gender and sexuality. These adaptations include trans-species desires; monstrous sexuality; gay and lesbian sexualities; and children's burgeoning desires, amongst other non-normative depictions of gender and sexuality. I argue for the significance of intertextual queering throughout this book but most explicitly in my chapter on *Ash*, where I use it as my theoretical foundation.

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[23] Sanders, *Adaptation and Appropriation*, 31.

[24] Jennifer Orme, "A Wolf's Queer Invitation: David Kaplan's Little Red Riding Hood and Queer Possibility," *Marvels & Tales* 29, no. 1 (2015): 87.

Another tool that creates a transformative adaptation is *perspective plurality*—providing many perspectives on a given topic. Transformative adaptations empower readers to question what they think they know about source texts by showing that there are other ways to consider the topic. They often do this by providing voice to characters who are largely voiceless in their source texts. For example, reading Grendel's description of the events of *Beowulf* does not erase his portrayal in the epic poem but instead adds texture to the known tale. Perspective plurality is also often achieved through heteroglossia, or many voices, which encourages readers to think about the plurality of perspectives in any given narrative. Heteroglossic language focuses on linguistic interaction and diversification and thus produces more complex possibilities. Mikhail Bakhtin, who created the term heteroglossia, says that the heteroglossic text produces meaning through relationships between voices.[25] Similarly, in a dialogic text, meaning is found through interrelations and interactions rather than through access to a single viewpoint. Dialogism allows for multiple voices instead of a single oppressive/authoritative one. Looking through multiple lenses creates a more complex series of interpretations than simply submitting to the author's singular ideological view. In my conclusion on the parallel novel, I argue this point further with a more refined scope. Much of the power of transformative adaptations lies within their ability to produce a plurality of perspectives.

Perspective plurality even takes place metatextually in adaptations studies; there is almost an unlimited vocabulary of terms used within the field. Leitch identifies the categories of celebrations (which entail curatorial adaptation, replication, homage, heritage adaptation, pictorial realization, liberation, and literalization); adjustment (comprising of compression, expansion, correction, updating, superimposition); neoclassic imitation; revisions; colonization; analogy; analogue; parody; pastiche; and allusion.[26]

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[25] Bakhtin says that "the novel senses itself on the border between the completed, dominant literary language and the extraliterary languages that know heteroglossia" (67).

[26] Thomas Leitch, *Film Adaptation and Its Discontents* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007), 100–23. Celebrations are adaptations that try to remain as true as possible to their source texts. Adjustments make a prior text more suitable for film. Neoclassic imitations borrow from the past to demonstrate something about the present. Revisions rewrite the original in more extensive ways than adjustments. Colonizations imbue past texts with new meanings. Analogies depart from the source text's meaning simply for the sake of creating new art, and analogues use prior formulas to inform their texts. Parodies satirize their models, while pastiches, perhaps the most difficult to define, mimic without relying on satire. Finally, allusions are brief intertextual references.

While these categories were meant to clarify previously muddled types of adaptations, Leitch admits that they are "embarrassingly fluid."[27] These categories build on Gennette's, Hutcheon's, Stam's, and Sanders' approaches to adaptations categorization. The adaptations here analyzed fit at different times within the scope of different strategies but match up most closely to what Leitch calls colonization and what Sanders deems appropriation:[28] texts that purposely transform the way readers think about the source text(s) and therefore transform readers themselves. Adaptations studies' varied perspectives on its topic of study mirrors how transformative adaptations provide readers with a plurality of perspectives to represent a more complete picture.

This book is organized as follows: Chapter 1 explores how *The Wind Done Gone* parodies *Gone with the Wind* to retell the story from the point of view of an enslaved woman on Tara Plantation. The adaptation demonstrates an African-American authorial tradition of worrying the line through signification. Using African-American literary theory, I argue that *The Wind Done Gone* intertextually parodies the portrayal of stereotypes and sexuality found in *Gone with the Wind* and worries the line of African-American literary tradition through its use of the rhetorical tools of irony, signposting front cover portraiture, and confirmation documents found in slave narratives. By doing so, the adaptation illustrates the continued haunting presence of slavery in today's cultural imagination and pushes against its ideological effects. African-American authors often rely on signifying past works as a sort of literary tradition that highlights racist discourse. In my argument, I modify the current theoretical discussion about postmodern adaptation, which posits that reworking something that already exists intervenes in the previous political moment as well as the contemporary one to bring a new set of knowledge. This applies to *The Wind Done Gone*; however, I argue that reworking and parody have a specific function that intersects with African-American literary criticism.

In Chapter 2, I investigate how adaptations of traditional legend take notions of the monstrous abject in the popular imagination and recreate the Beowulf epic and the myth of the Minotaur, respectively, from the point of view of the monstrous Other. Using psychoanalytic theory, I argue that "The House of Asterion" and *Grendel* transform the monster to be an

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[27] Leitch, *Film Adaptation and Its Discontents*, 123.

[28] In *Film Adaptation and Its Discontents*, Leitch says: "Colonizing adaptations, like ventriloquists, see progenitor texts as vessels to be filled with new meanings. Any new content is fair game, whether it develops meanings implicit in the earlier text, amounts to an ideological critique of that text, or goes off in another direction entirely." Leitch, *Film Adaptation and Its Discontents,* 110.

insidiously empathetic and thus ultimately more sublime representation of the abject. They intertextually invoke their parent texts and explore the monster's own maternal parentage, which leads to their eventual (and Evental) demise. First-person narration in these adaptations about the abject forces us to empathize with the monstrous Other. By reading these texts as adaptations, we reconsider the depictions of myth and legend that we know. Myth creates a system of representation that allows us to discuss what makes us human; and some of what makes us human is inherent monstrosity.

Chapter 3 argues that *Ash* adapts the Cinderella story in a way that pushes against heteronormativity and opens it up to queer potentiality. Using queer theory as a foundation, I argue that *Ash* extends the heteronormative idealism of the "Cinderella" story to queer potentiality by creating a recursive queer time of fairy tales and dreams and representing non-heteronormative framing and relationships. Writing queer subjects who operate in queer time allows Lo to reconfigure the heteronormative hierarchies of the traditional fairy tale. In doing so, she challenges assumptions about gender and sexuality and asks readers to rethink what they believe about the "Cinderella" fairy tale. By shifting narration from an authoritative space (the "once upon a time" tale that has always been around in some incarnation or another) to a personal one, *Ash* and other transformative adaptations encourage readers to empathize with the heroine and question traditional narratives. Through this process, the hierarchies of authoritative texts become destabilized.

In Chapter 4, I claim that *Annie John* adapts *A Tempest* and *Wide Sargasso Sea*, themselves adaptations of *The Tempest* and *Jane Eyre*, and so explore the limits of adaptations studies. Drawing from postcolonial theory, I claim that *A Tempest* and *Wide Sargasso Sea* adapt their source texts in a way that exposes colonial ideology by shifting narration to the colonized subject and location to the Caribbean. *Annie John* further responds to this practice of Caribbean revisionism by signifying not only *The Tempest* and *Jane Eyre*, but also their most prominent postcolonial Caribbean adaptations. This shows that the process of revisionism, rather than defining the result, is what matters when it comes to adaptations studies. In this chapter, I show how adaptations studies can provide ways to think about texts that themselves are not adaptations-as-such.

Chapter 5 further contends that the rhetorical strategies that allow for a transformative adaptation at the cross-section of the genre are collaborative originality, intertextual queering, and perspective plurality. This chapter elaborates on the claims made in this introduction to apply specifically to the parallel novel. Using postmodern theory, I contend that the notion of literary ephemerality, or the inability to name or otherwise

grasp potential narrative concepts, demonstrates the project of the postmodern parallel novel: to question, destabilize, and show how there might be a variety of perspectives for any otherwise authoritative narrative. This is significant because these strategies ask readers to question how literary worlds are constructed and connected, thereby also encouraging postmodern critique. Viewing patterns at the cross-section of the genre gives a more comprehensive view of just how these strategies work—and therefore, the work they accomplish.

Chapters move from examining adaptations one-to-one (*The Wind Done Gone* to *Gone With the Wind*) to two-to-two (*Grendel* and "The House of Asterion" to *Beowulf* and the myth of the Minotaur) to one-to-several (*Ash* to many "Cinderella" variations) to several-to-several (*Annie John* to *A Tempest* and *Wide Sargasso Sea*, themselves to *The Tempest* and *Jane Eyre*) to a broad overview at the cross-section of the genre (many parallel novels and their source texts). This progression is meant to demonstrate the expansive potentiality for adaptations studies: not only is adaptations studies able to intersect successfully with a variety of other traditions of literary theory (African-American, psychoanalytic, queer, postcolonial, postmodern, and surely more), but it also provides a useful foundation for literary investigation through a web of discursive texts and analyses.

Finally, the Conclusion discusses how adaptations studies itself is undergoing—and will continue to undergo—a transformation. As literature evolves, and as adaptations are created in diverse new ways, adaptations studies will experience its own ongoing reimagining.

CHAPTER 1

STEREOTYPES, SEXUALITY, AND INTERTEXTUAL HAUNTING

> Mammy is my mother. I think of her more as the days pass. I can't pass away from her.[1]

Towards the end of Alice Randall's 2001 novel *The Wind Done Gone*, readers are confronted by an epistolary inclusion: the narrator's mother, Mammy, writes from beyond the grave to negotiate a marriage proposal for her daughter. Mammy's voice is clear. As Cynara, the narrator, says when she reads a letter written by Mammy to advocate for her daughter's marriage, "syllable and sound, the words were Mammy's."[2] *The Wind Done Gone* retells the history of Margaret Mitchell's *Gone with the Wind,* and so the inclusion of Mammy's voice and identity as something far beyond just a source of support for *Gone with the Wind*'s protagonist, Scarlett, is jarring and even revolutionary. Randall gives voice to characters who lack agency in *Gone with the Wind* and in doing so infuses them with complex personhood. *The Wind Done Gone*'s heteroglossic approach signifies other literary works, especially its source text and slave narratives. I argue that *The Wind Done Gone* intertextually parodies the portrayal of stereotypes and sexuality found in *Gone with the Wind* and worries the line of African-American literary tradition through its use of the rhetorical tools of irony, signposting front cover portraiture, and confirmation documents found in slave narratives; by doing so, the adaptation illustrates the continued haunting presence of slavery in today's cultural imagination and pushes against its ideological effects. This matters because as Henry Louis Gates, Jr., Cheryl Wall, Avery Gordon, and others show, African-American authors often rely on signifying past works as a sort of literary tradition that highlights racist discourse. In this chapter, I modify the current theoretical discussion about postmodern adaptation, which posits that reworking something that already exists intervenes in the previous political moment as

[1] Alice Randall, *The Wind Done Gone* (New York: Mariner, 2006), 161.
[2] Randall, *The Wind Done Gone*, 162.

well as the contemporary one to bring a new set of knowledge. This applies to *The Wind Done Gone*; however, reworking and parody also have a specific function that intersects with African-American literary criticism. This is essential since in Mitchell's iconographic text filled with nostalgia about the enslaved South, Cynara could not write her own text. There is no singular original she refers back to but rather a multitude of previous texts along with slavery's haunting legacy. *The Wind Done Gone* responds in an original way not only to the romanticized view of the Confederate South created in Mitchell's immensely popular epic, but also to recurring race and gender issues in the years since its publication.

Randall's entire literary project is a self-proclaimed "unauthorized parody" that seeks to "explode" the mythos of its source text (cover). As Gates explains, African-American authors often respond to racist discourse by signifying on "white racism through parody."[3] The exaggerative effect of parody can hyperbolize problematic beliefs to the point of ridiculousness. *The Wind Done Gone* accomplishes this by telling the story of Tara (here Tata) Plantation from the point of view of one of its enslaved people and reversing the racist paradigmatic and benevolent paternalism set up in Mitchell's text. In this adaptation, Scarlett is herself part black through a Haitian ancestress, and she and Cynara are half-sisters through Mammy's affair with Scarlett's father. This sort of intertextuality through "embedded signification" was viewed as copyright breach by Mitchell's estate.[4] Embedded signification is "revision through recontextualization."[5] It creates something anew by referencing past works in a way that makes the adaptation become part of the original as much as the original becomes part of the adaptation.[6] Since Mitchell's estate saw Randall's choice to kill Scarlett as ending the potential for future adaptations, they took Randall to trial to prevent publication. Although the court found too many similarities between the texts to find Randall's work unrelated, her claim for the social significance of parody (particularly for African-American authors) allowed for the novel's publication. The case rested on the notion that *The Wind Done Gone* is a "transformative work."[7] Much of this transformative work occurs in the novel's use of countercultural voice that resists *Gone with the Wind*'s known narrative. *The Wind Done Gone* democratizes the authoritative

[3] Gates, *The Signifying Monkey*, 102.
[4] Gates, *The Signifying Monkey*, xxxi.
[5] Gates, *The Signifying Monkey*, xxxi.
[6] Gates, *The Signifying Monkey*, xxxi.
[7] Jeffrey Grossett, "The Wind Done Gone: Transforming Tara into a Plantation Parody,"
Literature Review 1113, no. 52 (2002): 1125.

resonance of *Gone with the Wind* and demonstrates that there are other voices that exist in tandem with the canonical tale. These voices include marginalized characters from *Gone with the Wind* as well as a history of African-American literary work, which populates *Gone with the Wind*'s story world with a plurality of perspectives and intentions. By relying on a countercultural approach, Randall creates a dialogic text that destabilizes the notion of a dominant perspective. This matters because it puts forth an argument that all stories matter, not just the ones we have heard the most.

While *The Wind Done Gone* was published nearly two decades ago, it has been the subject of little literary scholarship beyond an insightful book review by Lovalerie King, who briefly notes the text's practice of signification; an article by Nicole Argall, who defines Cynara's journey as "Africana womanist"[8]; an article by Bettye Williams, who argues that the impetus of parody "is that the appropriation fuels a critical commentary on the original"[9]; and a chapter devoted in Richard Shur's *Parodies of Ownership*, in which Shur applies what he calls hip-hop aesthetics, or a new theory of signification as it relates to hip-hop, to *The Wind Done Gone*. Most other analyses of the novel focus purely on legality issues surrounding the copyright battle brought forth by Mitchell's estate that sought to prevent publication of the adaptation. These responses use language from the court case and imagery from the novel as jumping off points to discuss larger issues of intellectual property, first amendment rights, the public domain, parody, and piracy. However, while *The Wind Done Gone* has not been given much scholarly attention, it is important to do so because of the way it demonstrates African-American literary tradition and signification through the lens of adaptation. This expands the theoretical approaches of Gates, Wall, and others that show how adaptation is integral to this tradition. The lack of scholarly attention given to *The Wind Done Gone* is not correlated to its lack of popularity, however. The novel caused quite a stir at its (eventual) publication: it reached several bestseller lists and was even nominated for the NAACP Image Award for Outstanding Literary Work. Perhaps the adaptation has not been given much scholarly attention because it reads as a literary criticism itself, pointing out historical inaccuracies, broad assumptions, and racist ideology permeating *Gone with the Wind*. Randall stated in a 2001 interview that part of the inspiration for her parody novel was the pervasiveness of the phrase "I don't know nothin' 'bout

[8] Nicole Argall, "A Rib from my Chest," *CLA Journal* 47, no. 2 (2003): 231.
[9] Bettye J. Williams, "Glimpsing Parody, Language, and Post-Reconstruction Themes in Alice Randall's *The Wind Done Gone*," *CLA Journal* 47, no. 3 (2004): 313.

birthin' babies" she often heard used in the Southern United States.[10] This phrase is used by the slave Prissy in the film version of *Gone with the Wind*, and Randall grew tired of hearing white people using it as an indicator of ignorance.[11] While much scholarship has pointed to the racism inherent in the portrayal of slaves and romanticized view of slaveholder culture in *Gone with the Wind*, Randall tries a different tactic and revises the novel itself. Her writing invokes many specific moments from the source text but reframes it to give black characters much more agency—and, of course, to add some titillation.

The Wind Done Gone reflects an ongoing historical dialogue about African-American experience, so I use African-American theoretical criticism to help unpack the novel. In particular, I rely on African-American feminist discussions of intersectionality, Henry Louis Gates Jr.'s theory of African-American literary criticism, Cheryl Wall's study "worrying the line," and Avery Gordon's discussion of haunting in the sociological imagination. African-American feminist scholars argue that oppression takes place through racism, sexism, and classism, and that these categories cannot be parsed. The experience of being a black woman cannot be broken down into just race or gender but must be understood intersectionally. Traditional feminist theory does not account for the experience of black women in America; literature is inextricable from culture so the vigilant scholar must consider variable heteroglossic interactions even within the same community.[12] "Multiply-burdened," black women are often left out from both antiracist and feminist politics since these cannot account for the intersection of race and gender.[13] Since "the intersectional experience is greater than the sum of racism and sexism, any analysis that does not take intersectionality into account cannot sufficiently address the particular manner in which Black women are subordinated."[14] Oppression occurs concurrently. This means an impoverished woman experiences the world differently than a wealthy woman or impoverished man does, and so on. Kimberle Crenshaw advocates using a bottom-up rather than a top-down

[10] Randall quoted in David Kirkpatrick, "A Writer's Tough Lesson in Birthin' a Parody," *New York Times*, April 26, 2001, 4.
[11] Randall quoted in David Kirkpatrick, "A Writer's Tough Lesson in Birthin' a Parody," 4.
[12] Hazel Carby, "History's Hybrids," *The Women's Review of Books* 17, no. 5 (2000): 17.
[13] Kimberle Crenshaw, "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics," *University of Chicago Legal Forum* 8, no.1 (1989): 140.
[14] Crenshaw, "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex," 140.

approach to the politics of racism and sexism, which would "develop language which is critical of the dominant view and which provides some basis for unifying activity."[15] In *The Wind Done Gone*, Randall develops language critical of the dominant view by representing Cynara's intersectional first-person narrated experiences. Cynara encounters systematic oppression due to both her race and her gender, and these categories must be addressed in tandem.

As Gates claims, signification and literary parody are used by African-American authors to "create a new narrative space for representing the recurring referent of… the so-called black experience."[16] He argues that African-American authors signify and parody other texts to push back against dominant narratives. In *The Signifying Monkey: A Theory of African-American Literary Criticism*, Gates asserts a theory that argues for the importance of signification, or meta-discourse that involves doubling and re-doubling signs through repetition and revision.[17] He draws a parallel between African-American rhetoric and mythology to demonstrate that while this repetition and revision does respond to Western discourse, it also has roots in African history. Although African-Americans often signify by responding to Western criticism, it also takes place a priori to this criticism. African-American literary tradition is not some monolithic entity, argues Gates, but rather a systematic approach to rhetoric through signification. Authors refer to other authors and their works and reuse thematic elements and motifs in order to signify upon them to create new rhetorical approaches to meaning. This extends Zora Neale Hurston's argument that "originality is the modification of ideas" rather than creating something entirely anew.[18] Gates actually devotes an entire chapter to Hurston's acts of signification, which include formal revision of Frederick Douglass, Frances E.W. Harper, and Jean Toomer; later, Hurston's own work would be signified on by Alice Walker, Toni Morrison, and others. By referencing these specific acts of signification, Gates demonstrates the potency and continuity of a literary tradition long ignored in Western discourse. He gave a statement for Randall when she went to trial against Mitchell's estate, saying:

> Scholars have long established that parody is at the heart of African-American expression, because it is a creative mechanism for the exercise of political speech, sentiment, and commentary

[15] Crenshaw, "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex," 167.
[16] Gates, *The Signifying Monkey*, 121.
[17] Gates, *The Signifying Monkey*, 52, 57.
[18] Zora Neale Hurston, "Imitation," in *Negro* (New York: Negroes Universities Press, 1969), 42.

> on the part of people who feel themselves oppressed or maligned and wish to protest that condition of oppression or misrepresentation . . . and 'Transformative Uses'/*The Wind Done Gone* is only the most recent instance of a long and humorous tradition.[19]

This assertion demonstrates the significance for African-American authors specifically to use parody as a subversive response to oppressive discourse.

Similarly, Wall traces intertextual practices in the works of black women writers. She shows how African-American women writers play with literary tropes to stake a claim in a new tradition that represents collective experience in individual ways. In blues music, worrying the line is an expression to describe changing the meaning or pitch of a melody; in African-American literary tradition, worrying the line is similar to the signification and revision-as-process advocated by Gates and refined by Wall. In *Worrying the Line: Black Woman Writers, Lineage, and Literary Tradition*, she argues that the concept of lineage works differently for African-Americans, whose families were often torn apart due to slavery. Literary depictions of the African-American experience are "complicate[d]" by troubled lineage, as well as forms of hierarchy and subjugation such as gender and class.[20] Instead of writing about traumatic interracial encounters like many black men writers do, she contends, contemporary black women writers often write instead about intimate relationships.[21] In doing so, these writers show that the best defense against racist oppression "is the formation of a cultural identity derived from an understanding of history."[22] Wall shows how stories by black women writers are negotiated intertextually and intergenerationally to recount past narratives. Through repetition, revisions, and allusions, these writers show the impact of cultural memory. She notes: "A worried line is not a straight one. Writing in and across diverse genres, contemporary black women writers revise and subvert the conventions of the genres they appropriate, whether the essay, the lyric, the memoir, or the novel."[23] This means that black women's writing, such as Randall's, is inherently intersectional and should be examined as it correlates with several literary traditions. *The Wind Done Gone* explores the intimacy of Cynara's troubled familial and romantic relationships as they coincide with

[19] Henry Louis Gates, "Declaration of Henry Louis Gates, Jr." From SunTrust Bank v. Houghton Mifflin case file, n.d.
[20] Cheryl A. Wall, *Worrying the Line: Black Women Writers, Lineage, and Literary Tradition* (Wilmington: University of North Carolina Press, 2005), 6.
[21] Wall, *Worrying the Line*, 6.
[22] Wall, *Worrying the Line*, 6.
[23] Wall, *Worrying the Line*, 13.

systematic racism; it does so by revising and subverting the novel's conventions while simultaneously signifying a shared history of black women's experiences. Randall uses these intertextual interactions to invoke the literary precedent and authority of *Gone with the Wind* but also a tradition of African-American literature.

African-American experience is also accounted for through the sociocultural phenomenon of haunting. In *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination*, Avery argues that the living death of slavery continues to haunt not only African-Americans but also people from all modes of life. Gordon shows how people are connected through complex personhood, a concept which "means that the stories people tell about themselves, about their troubles, about their social worlds, and about their society's problems are entangled and weave between what is immediately available as a story and what their imaginations are reaching toward."[24] This entanglement allows for shared cultural memory and dialogic histories. Avery also contends that "complex personhood means that even those called 'Other' are never never that."[25] By writing the story of an enslaved woman with complex personhood in *The Wind Done Gone*, Randall reveals that Cynara is "never never" Other. She calls Scarlett the tongue-in-cheek title "Other," which ironically demonstrates her awareness of the significance of complex personhood. Randall further signifies collective African-American experience by showing how slavery haunts the cultural imagination and by alluding to other slave narratives.

While some have found fault with Randall's zealousness in her project to queer the legacy of *Gone with the Wind*,[26] zealousness is a large part of what makes for productive parody. Randall uses what Bakhtin deems internally persuasive discourse, which invites dialogic response because it is "half ours and half someone else's."[27] She not only parodies her source text but also self-parodies via "extraliterary heteroglossia" through critique of the racist ideology set forth in Mitchell's view of the Reconstruction South.[28] *The Wind Done Gone* does not make the argument that Mitchell's version of events is incorrect and only the adaptation provides the true, right story. Rather, it puts forth the notion that there may be more than one story

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[24] Avery Gordon, *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011), 104.
[25] Gordon, *Ghostly Matters*, 4.
[26] New York Times book reviewer Megan Harlan calls the novel "spare, flat and oblique" ("Books," *New York Times*, 1 July 2001).
[27] Mikhail Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1982), 582.
[28] Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, 7.

operating at any given time, and that "truth" is discovered through shifting individualisms rather than being a static category. Authoritative discourse gains its power from existing removed from the individual; it comes from no-place, no-time, and infinite power. Though readers know that Margaret Mitchell wrote *Gone with the Wind*, the distance in time between its composition, subsequent filmic popularity, and contemporary readings grants it a certain static power. Conversely, internally persuasive discourse invites dialogism because it is "half ours and half someone else's."[29] By rewriting an authoritative narrative, Randall calls for readers to question their own notion of cultural truth and to consider the haunting presence of *Gone with the Wind*'s authority throughout the American ideological imagination.

Gone with the Wind is a vast bildungsroman that tells the story of charming but temperamental Scarlett O'Hara alongside the backdrop of the South throughout the Civil War. The book romanticizes a lost Southern culture through its focus on social etiquette, love entanglements, and a sympathetic view of slavery. Its main theme lies within the struggle for survival, however: Scarlett seduces multiple men and breaks with ladylike tradition in order to stay alive and keep her land. In *The Wind Done Gone*, the narrator Cynara shows a different view of growing up on Tata Plantation. Her mother Mammy still dotes on Scarlett (here Other) as she does in *Gone with the Wind*, but in *The Wind Done Gone* this attention is seen as vengeful. Mammy cultivates Scarlett's personality in an attempt to have revenge against white men. Cynara is sent away from Tata because the plantation owner and Scarlett's father, Planter, wants Mammy to focus her full attentions on Other without the distraction of her other child there. Mammy dies, and Cynara and Rhett (R.), who she has been having an affair with, move to Washington. In response to this, Other drinks herself to death. While this moment is somewhat anticlimactic in the text, it signifies Randall's true break with the world of *Gone with the Wind*. In another contentious move, Randall also fashions Scarlett's love interest Ashley (Dreamy Gentleman in *The Wind Done Gone*) and the prostitute Belle (Beauty) as queer. The novel is overtly parodic, but the implicit critique in *The Wind Done Gone* works to problematize intersectional racism in *Gone with the Wind*.

Randall shows the plurality of voices in any given authoritative narrative and historicizes her characters in a way that signifies *Gone with the Wind*. The characters in *Gone with the Wind* reference many literary works, including several of Shakespeare's plays and Harriet Beecher

[29] Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, 582.

Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, and also dozens of historical figures and events. In *The Wind Done Gone*, Cynara similarly references her awareness of and occasional interaction with historical figures, including Edmonia Lewis, Dredd Scott, Harriet Jacobs and Harriet Tubman, Sally Hemmings, Francis Cardozo, and others.[30] Cynara even goes to visit Frederick Douglass at his house at one point in the text. This appeal to authority through inclusion of real people who could vouch for her presence intertextually parodies *Gone with the Wind* and also mimics how many autobiographic slave narratives were introduced through someone else, usually a socially privileged white person. Cynara also demonstrates her familiarity with the English/American literary canon through a vast array of allusions including those to Calypso/Odysseus, Hansel and Gretel, Moses, Mary and Martha, and three of Shakespeare's plays: R*omeo and Juliet, Cleopatra*, and *Othello*, which extends Scarlett's allusions to *Julius Caesar, The Tempest,* and *Macbeth* in *Gone with the Wind*.[31] Cynara even references Daphne du Maurier's famous opening line to *Rebecca*, published just two years after *Gone with the Wind*, when she says that "Last night I dreamed of cotton farm."[32] The shift from vast English estate to forced place of servitude is ironic while also showing that Cynara is a contemporary construction meant to show the ways that slavery continues to haunt us today.

The Wind Done Gone also demonstrates this kind of intertextuality and haunting by problematizing several stereotypes about African-American women, in particular the Mammy and Jezebel stereotypes. Randall challenges racism specifically as it intersects with gender, embodiment, and sexuality and demonstrates the oppressiveness of these stereotypes. By appropriating and twisting stereotypes about women and sexuality, she also responds to stereotypes about women and sexuality that take place in the source text, particularly those produced through an oppressive lens. Patriarchal narratives in the antebellum south elevated white female purity and prudence while casting black women into sexual tropes; they were either the Mammy, an unsexed older woman who was often considered part of the family, or the Jezebel, who was believed to have a voracious sexual appetite. As Patricia Hill says, the Mammy stereotype was purposely "created to justify the economic exploitation of house slaves and sustained to explain Black women's long-standing restriction to domestic service."[33] *Gone with the Wind* helped to solidify the Mammy

[30] Randall, *The Wind Done Gone*, 25, 28, 50, 78.
[31] Randall, *The Wind Done Gone*, 13, 37, 50, 90.
[32] Randall, *The Wind Done Gone*, 13.
[33] Hill quoted in Christopher Sewell, "Mammies and Matriarchs," *Journal of African American Studies* 17, no. 3 (2013): 310.

trope in a kindhearted but passionless flat character who tries to teach Scarlett the rules of courtship.

In *Gone with the Wind*, Mammy's only desire lies within her simplistic and unquestioning love for the O'Hara family. She is depicted as old, black and elephantine: she is "a huge old woman with the small, shrewd eyes of an elephant... shining black, pure African."[34] Yet despite her blatantly nonsexual portrayal, Mammy is oddly entwined with Scarlett's sexuality. While Lady O'Hara does not see through Scarlett's veneer of gentility, Mammy does, and takes it upon herself to chastise her charge when she feels she is behaving improperly. Mammy is also in control of Scarlett's main means of attracting suitable mates—dressing in finery and lacing her tiny waist—and dictates rules that Scarlett should follow in order to properly enter society. Rhett recognizes her position as "real head of the house,"[35] and yet Mammy has little if any agency. She instead sacrifices her own individuality and sexuality for the O'Hara family, even to the extent that she keeps working for them after Emancipation.

The Wind Done Gone undermines this dominant narrative but shows how it still haunts by satirizing Mammy as an overtly sexual creature with complex maternal inclinations all while keeping her title of "Mammy." The juxtaposition of blatant sexual behavior with her sexless name parodies her positionality in *Gone with the Wind*. Here, despite her name, Mammy does not fit into the Mammy stereotype. By aligning a black mother character with subversive sexuality, Randall also invokes other neo-slave narratives that accomplish similar projects.[36] A discourse shift takes place in *The Wind Done Gone*: Mammy's character is the only one to still be called by her name from the source text, but her characterization is vastly different, thus problematizing any preconceived notions about what constitutes a Mammy. In *The Wind Done Gone*, Mammy is driven and not very stereotypically maternal, which plays on stereotypes that still haunt the American imagination. She purposely sets out to seduce Planter in order to produce mixed children. In historic depictions of the Mammy stereotype, she was a "direct juxtaposition" to the Jezebel, and her largeness contrasted white beauty ideals.[37]

In a subversion of her character's portrayal in *Gone with the Wind* and with the historical stereotype, however, Mammy's sexual attractiveness

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[34] Margaret Mitchell, *Gone with the Wind* (G. K. Hall, 1992), 30.
[35] Mitchell, *Gone with the Wind*, 1212.
[36] For further reading on African-American mothers and subversive sexuality, see Aliyyah Abdur-Rahman's "'The Strangest Freaks of Despotism': Queer Sexuality in Antebellum African-American Slave Narratives."
[37] Sewell, "Mammies and Matriarchs," 310.