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Adaptation Studies and Biological Models: *Antigone* as a Test Case

1. Introduction

The main focus of adaptation studies since its inception about half a century ago has been transference from page to screen and, until fairly recently, this focus has either implied or directly claimed the primacy of the former. In the past ten years or so, attempts have been made to redress this balance and to move away from what is commonly known as the ‘fidelity’ issue (the extent to which an adaptation remains faithful to its source) into more productive analyses and discussions of inter- and transtextuality, and especially of intermediality. However, as Thomas Leitch remarked in the inaugural volume of the prestigious journal *Adaptation*, just less than three years ago:

[D]espite the best efforts of [...] virtually every other theorist of adaptation past and present, the field is still haunted by the notion that adaptations ought to be faithful to their ostensible sourcetexts.¹

Leitch suggests that one of the reasons that adaptation studies is still haunted by the ghost of fidelity is precisely because theorists appear not to be able to refrain from reiterating what they have long been at pains to reject. In other words, time and again, the titles of articles, chapters, books and courses on adaptation foreground the

1 Thomas Leitch, ‘Adaptation Studies at the Crossroads’, 1/2008, p. 64.

very binary hierarchies they are attempting to deconstruct or at least undermine.² In recent years, some attempts have been made to shift the issue of adaptation to new and more scientific ground. Linda Hutcheon is perhaps foremost among those theorists who want to look at adaptation as a ‘process’ and not simply as a ‘product.’ To this end, Hutcheon’s book-length study *The Theory of Adaptation*, which appeared five years ago and, to an even greater extent, an article she co-wrote a year later, provocatively suggest that adaptation studies might do well to at least consider some of the terminology employed by biology.³ By dividing various written, visual and audio works into genotypes and phenotypes, concentrating on replication and mutation (both of which comprise repetition with variations), Hutcheon hopes to encourage us to ‘redefine’ the concept of success. Instead of using fidelity to measure success and thereby restricting itself to qualitative pronouncements, adaptation studies might then clear itself some space to focus on *what* survives in an adaptation, *how* it survives, and *what new forms* emerge to secure further survival.

Some will argue that this approach is only pseudoscientific and that Hutcheon is merely restating the aims and methods of memetics. Taking its name from Richard Dawkins’ coinage of *meme*, meaning a ‘unit of cultural transmission, or a unit of *imitation*’ and corresponding to the gene, memetics is the study of what might be called the mechanics of culture. The *meme*, unlike its biological counterpart the gene, need not be any particular size. It can be applied to a theme, a thread, a leitmotif, or even to an entire work. For Dawkins, the crucial concept is imitation—he originally cre-

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- 2 From George Bluestone’s seminal *Novels into Film*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1957, to Mireia Aragay’s (ed.) *Books in Motion*, Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2005, a plethora of volumes has followed this pattern, almost all of them prefaced by an introduction that deplores the persistence of measuring films against books. See, for example, Cartmell and Whelehan’s introduction to *The Cambridge Companion to Literature on Screen*: ‘This book looks at literary texts not as primary sources but as “intertexts,” one (albeit dominant) of a multiplicity of perspectives, thereby freeing an adaptation from unprofitable “eye for eye” comparisons’, p. 3, or John Golden’s ‘Literature into Film (and back Again): Another Look at the Old Dog’, *The English Journal*, 1/2007, pp. 24–30. The pairs ‘fiction and film’, ‘page and screen’, ‘novel and cinema’ appear with striking regularity.
- 3 Linda Hutcheon, *A Theory of Adaptation*, Oxford: Routledge, 2006 and Linda Hutcheon and Gary R. Bortolotti, ‘On the Origin of Adaptations: Rethinking Fidelity Discourse and “Success” – Biologically’, *New Literary History* 2/2007, pp. 443–58.

ated the word as an abbreviation of the Greek *mimeme*. By copying or replication, memes can thus be transmitted from one place to another, one time to another, and one human being to another.⁴ As such, their propagation has sometimes been regarded as having more in common with the spread of a virus than the blending of chromosomes. However, one need not go so far as try to present a one-to-one correspondence between biological and literary adaptation, nor indeed is that the intention of either Dawkins or Hutcheon. While arguing for a homology rather than an analogy, Hutcheon offers the idea that there is ‘a similarity in structure that is indicative of a common origin’ and not merely a ‘metaphorical association’.⁵ However, reluctant to press the issue much further, she adds: ‘[w]e are not saying that cultural adaptation is biological; our claim is more modest. It is simply that both organisms and stories “evolve”—that is, replicate and change’.⁶ Among the obvious advantages of exploring such a homology would be an escape from the fidelity syndrome. A film, for example, need no longer ‘be true’ to its source if it is regarded not as an end-product but as part of a continuum. Thus, to quote one of Hutcheon’s examples, instead of measuring, say Baz Luhrman’s *Romeo and Juliet* (1996) against Shakespeare’s ‘original’ play, one could look, and far more productively, at the survival of the central narrative of that story across various media. Ovid’s tale of Pyramus and Thisbe (*Metamorphoses*, 8AD) stands at one end of this spectrum and works such as James Cameron’s *Titanic* (1997) and Ang Lee’s *Brokeback Mountain* (2005) at the other. In between, of course, are hundreds if not thousands of versions of star-crossed lovers.

I would like to show here not only that Hutcheon’s concept of homology is viable, but also that the shift from product to process will result in a significant advance for adaptation studies. I have chosen *Antigone* as a test case for several reasons: it reaches back to the beginnings of European literature, it has undergone a very large number of adaptations and transformations and, perhaps most im-

4 Richard Dawkins, *The Selfish Gene*, Oxford: OUP, 1976, p. 192.

5 Hutcheon, 2006, p. 444.

6 *ibid.*, 446.

portantly, it has become a paradigm for tales about strong, independent women.

2. Antigone

First appearing over two and half millennia ago in the form of a tale about its eponymous heroine, *Antigone* continues to provide a model for a host of unlike works, each of which comprises different lines of descent, small variations on the 'original' that both make reference to it and diverge from it in significant ways. Just as in a biological homologue, certain features remain dormant, become vestigial, or even disappear entirely. In Jean Anouilh's celebrated version of the play, a nurse is added, Tiresias removed, and the chorus of Theban elders decreased to a single voice. And yet Anouilh's *Antigone* not only remains recognizable as a variation on the Sophoclean play: it also serves as one of the most powerful statements in modern times of an individual sacrificing her life to oppose the powers that be.⁷ Numerous other works from the mid-twentieth century tell of the resistance of the individual, but Antigone's opposition both speaks reason and goes beyond its bounds. Perhaps that is why Anouilh was attracted to the story. In his *Antigone*, replication is far from symmetrical and the emphasis consistently placed on the human dimension rather than on fate or the gods.

Antigone also presents something of a special case. While the inception of tragedy in ancient Athens dates back to the fifth century BCE, the content of the tragic plays dates back much further in time to the *Odyssey* and the *Iliad* (both attributed to Homer) and to the epic cycle, all of which are supposed to have been distilled from an oral tradition. The life of many of these tales was therefore sustained and replicated (one imagines imperfectly) for centuries before being committed to writing. How much they changed during that period is impossible to estimate, but by the time they and other stories (from Greek cosmology) were plundered by the first

⁷ Jean Anouilh, *Antigone*, London: Eyre Methuen, 1951.

tragic dramatists, the vogue for variation was soon established. As one prominent classicist has put it:

Of the close to six hundred works attributed by title to all the known tragic poets, there are a dozen different plays entitled *Oedipus* (at least six from the fifth century, including plays by all three surviving tragedians), eight plays named *Thyestes* (including versions by Sophocles and Euripides), and seven named *Medea* (Euripides' being the first).⁸

Indeed, of the six hundred titles, 'more than one hundred appear twice or more,' making Greek tragedy one of the most persistently self-replicating genres until the advent of the novel. *Antigone*, however, stands aside from the bulk of Greek drama in that the tale appears either to have been fabricated in fifth century Athens or adapted from a previously unrecorded oral source, probably local. The Oedipus story is mentioned in Homer, but he makes no mention of either of Oedipus' daughters, Ismene and Antigone. Both appear in Sophocles' *Oedipus at Colonus*, but that is from a different trilogy to either *Oedipus Rex* or the play *Antigone*, and while it may shed some light on Sophocles' view of her involvement in the myth, there is no evidence to suggest that he saw his two Antigones as the same character. Euripides is reported to have written an *Antigone*, although its plot has to be reconstructed (mostly from Hyginus) and the account is not reliable. Nevertheless, the Hyginus report does suggest that Euripides considerably revised and reshaped the plot. His *Antigone*, instead of dying, marries and has a child with Haemon, Creon's son. A single extra detail, noted by Hyginus, is that of Argia (the wife of Polyneices) helping Antigone to bury her brother.⁹

Although no other tragic play on the subject of Antigone has survived antiquity, parts of the story, such as the correlation between Creon's treatment of Polyneices' body and Achilles' treatment of Hector's corpse in Homer's *Iliad*, have often been noted and

8 Peter Burian, 'Myth into *mythos*: the shaping of the tragic plot', *The Cambridge Companion to Greek Tragedy*, ed. P.E. Easterling, Cambridge: CUP, 1997, pp. 178–208.

9 A full account can be found in the *Oxford Classical Dictionary*, Oxford: OUP, 1996.

may be regarded as a trait. In Homer, Achilles takes revenge on Hector for having killed his friend Patroclus and refuses to carry out Hector's dying request that he be buried with honour. Instead, Achilles taunts him, telling him that 'dogs and birds shall devour [him] utterly'.¹⁰ There is no direct allusion to Hector or Achilles in Sophocles' play, but the comparisons are obvious, as is the significance of Hector's burial which provides the conclusion to the *Iliad*. In this manner, a meme has been passed down, adapted to a new situation, without it even being iterated or voiced. In one sense, this could be regarded as analogous to genetic *masking*, a situation where a dominant allele is present but has no visible effect on a phenotype. Whether Sophocles' *Antigone* intentionally imitates, or borrows from, the Homeric myth is therefore besides the point—an important (and indeed dominant) trait is clearly present, although not foregrounded, and may be inherited by a new version of the story where it does become visible again. The idea of excessive *hubris*, especially on the part of the victor, was abhorrent to the Greeks, and Creon, like Achilles, pays with his life for his arrogance and unremitting lack of mercy. In this scenario, the central theme is that all deserve proper burial, traitors or not. If such a basic right is ignored or rejected, then there are clear grounds for revenge. To illustrate how important this was to Sophocles, we may note that even Ajax's enemies, in the play of that name, refrain from throwing his body into the sea and concede to his having a proper burial despite the fact that he has tried to kill them and then taken his own life.

10 See *The Iliad*, Book 22, ll, pp. 339–53, trans. by A.T. Murray, Cambridge: Harvard University Press; London, William Heinemann, Ltd., 1924. The whole passage reads as follows:

Then, his strength all spent, spake to him Hector of the flashing helm: "I implore thee by thy life and knees and parents, suffer me not to be devoured of dogs by the ships of the Achaeans; [340] nay, take thou store of bronze and gold, gifts that my father and queenly mother shall give thee, but my body give thou back to my home, that the Trojans and the Trojans' wives may give me my due meed of fire in my death." Then with an angry glance from beneath his brows spake unto him Achilles swift of foot: [345] "Implore me not, dog, by knees or parents. Would that in any wise wrath and fury might bid me carve thy flesh and myself eat it raw, because of what thou hast wrought, as surely as there lives no man that shall ward off the dogs from thy head; nay, not though they should bring hither and weigh out ransom ten-fold, aye, twenty-fold, [350] and should promise yet more; nay, not though Priam, son of Dardanus, should bid pay thy weight in gold; not even so shall thy queenly mother lay thee on a bier and make lament for thee, the son herself did bear, but dogs and birds shall devour thee utterly."

Elements of the Antigone story, however, may go back much further in time than Homer's epic.

Antigone's lonely journey to the cave and Hades follows an ancient heroic pattern, the dangerous quest into the unknown, which pervades ancient literature from the Gilgamesh Epic through the *Odyssey*, *Aeneid*, and beyond. Her heroic journey, however, also has a distinctly feminine character. She defies the city in the name of the house, and she takes on the role of Kore the Maiden, carried off to marry Death in the Underworld [...].¹¹

The difference is, of course, that Antigone does not (as does Persephone to whom she compares herself in Sophocles' play) return to earth. Yet Charles Segal and other classical scholars who have sought to illuminate the Greek plays against their mythic backgrounds know they are only looking at traces. As Segal points out, in Antigone's case, the meanings are often wound around reversals and to contradictions to their sources. Thus Sophocles can have Antigone compare herself to Niobe, the classical symbolic figure of mourning, who lost seven sons and seven daughters, and yet remain a symbol of virginity (Segal, 168). Indeed, her name, rather than comprising *anti* (against) and *gony* (bend, angle, etc.) may ultimately be derived from words that mean anti-generative (*gonai* meaning 'birth seed').

At the same time as the tragic plays inherit certain elements from the epic cycle, they are also grounded in contemporaneous politics. The opposition between *oikos* and *polis* was a serious issue in the emergent fifth century Athenian democracy, where traditional tribal and family rites (and roles) were slowly being taken over by the state. Creon acts 'wrongly' in attempting to make the burial of Polyneices a political issue when it is in fact a personal one, a fact that the Athenian audience would have understood very well.

Why Sophocles should have created a female figure to plead a brother's cause is more difficult to explain, except that Greek tragedy appears to be replete with strong female characters, even if

11 Charles Segal, 'Antigone: Death and Love, Hades and Dionysus', *Oxford Reading in Greek Tragedy*, ed. Erich Segal, Oxford: OUP, 1983, pp. 167–176.

women had few rights and their parts were always played by men. In *Antigone's* case, however, gender is not so clear. After suggesting that in some respects, *Antigone* is 'also a man,' Judith Butler adds:

And this is the title that Oedipus bestows upon her, a gift or reward for her loyalty. When Oedipus is banished [in Sophocles' *Oedipus at Colonus*], *Antigone* cares for him, and in her loyalty, is referred to as a man (*aner*).¹²

In Sophocles' *Antigone*, Creon voices a similar idea:

This girl knew well how to be insolent then, transgressing the established laws, and after her action this was a second insolence, to exult in this and to laugh at the thought of having done it. Indeed, now I am no man, but she is a man [μὲν οὐκ ἄνθρωπος, αὐτὴ δ' ἄνθρωπος], if she is to enjoy such power with impunity.¹³

In short, *Antigone's* transgression is to aspire (and act) outside the realms of those allotted to or legitimate to her standing as a woman. She will not know her place.

The most extensive study to date on the mythical Theban princess is George Steiner's *Antigones*, the author typically displaying a vast range of knowledge on the subject.¹⁴ As Steiner makes clear, from Hegel's interpretation of tragedy to Freud's placing of Oedipus at the centre of human sexual identity, it is *Antigone* who provided the primary model for the tragic mode. Through late antiquity and Byzantium to twelfth century Provençal poet Arnaut Marueil, Chaucer's *The Knight's Tale* in the late fourteenth century, Rucellai's *Rosamunda* in the early fifteenth century, George Gascoyne *Jocasta* (1565) and all the way through to Athol Fugard's *The Island* (1973) and David Hopkins' graphic comic (2007), the line of *Antigones* is

12 Judith Butler, *Antigone's Claim: Kinship Between Life and Death*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2000, p. 16.

13 Hugh Lloyd-Jones, ed. and trans., *Antigone*, from *Sophocles: Antigone, The Women of Trachis, Philoctetes, Oedipus at Colonus*, Loeb Classical Library, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994, pp. 46 & 47.

14 George Steiner, *Antigones: The Antigone Myth in Western Literature, Art and Thought*, Oxford: OUP, 1984.

almost unbroken. Friedrich Hölderlin (whose version was later adapted by Brecht), both Schlegels, Goethe, Hegel and Kierkegaard all single out *Antigone* as the epitome of Greek drama and Hegel's own famous theory of *tragic collision*, a clash between two ethical rights rather than good against evil or right against wrong, was long thought to lie at the centre of the tragic. In Hegel's system, neither side has the ethical upper hand; it is more a case of an irresistible force meeting with an immovable object, a dynamic dialectic that still stands at the centre of western politics. Perhaps the meme travels with Hegel's reasoning through the nineteenth century (and despite Matthew Arnold's inexplicable rejection of the relevance of *Antigone*¹⁵), informing further theatrical and operatic works versions as well as well as a host of nineteenth century fictional heroines from George Sand's *Indiana* (1832) to George Eliot's Maggie Tulliver in *The Mill on the Floss* (1860) and Emile Zola's *Nana* (1880). Twentieth century examples might include Alba in Isabella Allende's *The House of Spirits* (1982) or, more dynamically, Ellen Ripley in *Alien*, Paikea Apirana in *Whale Rider* (2002) or Matti in Charles Portis' *True Grit* (1968) all of which deal with the plight of an outspoken but disempowered young woman. Indeed, even Shakespeare's Cordelia may be seen as sharing some of Antigone's properties of character both in her refusal to pay lip-service to authority and in her willingness to sacrifice herself as a result of that refusal. As Marta Wilkinson demonstrates in her book *Antigone's Daughters*:

As a paradigm, Antigone serves as a role model for female expression and self-empowerment. In the preexisting space, her action and authorship are criminal. Woman must not only act, but create a separate space in which her actions will be acknowledged and her desires and needs addressed as valid.¹⁶

15 Matthew Arnold, *Poems: A New Edition*, 1853, Vol. I of *The Complete Prose Works of Matthew Arnold*, ed. R. H. Super, Ann Arbor: Univ. of Michigan Press, 1960–1977, p. 12. 'An action, like the action of the Antigone by Sophocles, which turns upon a conflict of the heroine's duty to her brother's corpse and that to the laws of her country, is no longer one in which we can feel a deep interest.' Interestingly, Arnold had published 'A Fragment of an Antigone' four years earlier in 1849, as well as making direct reference to the play in his best known short poem, 'Dover Beach'.

16 Marta L. Wilkinson, *Antigone's Daughters: Gender, Family, and Expression in the Modern Novel*, London: Peter Lang Pub. Inc., 2008.

The important issue here is that *Antigone* has served as a model for systems as widely different as Hegel's ethics and present day feminism. The various versions of the Joan of Arc story also borrow something from *Antigone* and it is no wonder perhaps that Anouilh also wrote a play about her (*L'Alouette*) and another about Euridyce. Each new adaptor has the freedom to use whatever she or he decides is suitable to the new work. As George Eliot phrases it in an essay on *Antigone*, written in 1856:

Wherever the strength of a man's intellect, or moral sense, or affection brings him into opposition with the rules society has sanctioned, there is renewed conflict between Antigone and Creon.¹⁷

Seamus Heaney's new translation of Sophocles' play places special emphasis on the funeral rites rather than on the character of the main protagonist. Entitled *The Burial at Thebes*, it nevertheless gives Antigone a very strong voice in a new idiom:

Was I going to humour you, or honour gods?
Sooner or later, I'll die anyhow
And sooner may be better in my case:
This death penalty is almost a relief.
If I had to live and suffer in the knowledge
That Polyneices was lying above ground
Insulted and defiled, that would be worse
Than having to suffer any doom of yours,
You think I'm just a reckless woman, but –
Never, Creon, forget:
You yourself could be the reckless one.¹⁸

Her resistance or 'wildness' Creon believes is inherited from her father, yet it is more than a proclivity for being stubborn or obtuse. It is a willfulness that is sometimes the only response to inevitable doom. It is not Antigone's compassion for a dead brother that

17 *Essays of George Eliot*, ed. Edward Pinney, New York: University of Columbia Press, 1963, p. 265.

18 Seamus Heaney, *The Burial at Thebes: Sophocles' Antigone*, London: Faber and Faber, 2004, p. 21.

makes her so admirable, but her unwillingness to concede to tyranny. Yet, individual interpretations hardly matter. In David Hopkins' recent version, illustrated by Tom Kurzanski, Antigone is somewhere between a punk and an emo with jaggedly cut dark hair and a pierced nose, inside an Athenian setting that evokes the atmosphere and some of the images of Frank Miller's *Sin City*.¹⁹ Like Sophocles, Hopkins allows Creon to relent and order the burial of Polyneices only to discover that the catastrophe is already underway and his son and his wife are now dead. The visual irony of Kurzanski's artwork reminds us that Antigone, having failed to provide a tomb for her brother, is herself entombed. Indeed, this joint effort reveals a close proximity to Brecht's *Antigone*, itself derived from Hölderlin's translation of Sophocles (1804), where the imagery is that of excess. Where other translators, for example, translate *deimon* as wondrous or formidable, Hölderlin and Brecht have 'monstrous'. In contrast, Heaney's rendition of the chorus' 'ode to man' resonates with Shakespeare's 'What a piece of work is man'.

3. Dormancy, vestigiality, hybridity

This article covers only a few examples from the veritable hoard of Antigones, but it does hope to show that elements, carried along in various forms, may lay dormant for long periods of time before spawning a slightly new breed. To use another analogy from biology, this dormancy is not unlike that found in the life cycles of some plants and insects that undergo long periods of apparent inactivity before reviving, either as a result of an inbuilt trigger or by an external factor.²⁰ I do not wish to suggest that there was anything 'organic' about the dormancy and reappearance of tragic drama, but many have speculated as to why the conditions for its composition and performance vanished so suddenly with the demise of imperial

19 David Hopkins and Tom Kurzanski, *Antigone*, Canada: Silent Devil Inc., 2006.

20 In some extraordinary cases, such as that of the mountain ash that sheds its seeds during forest fires, the parent form literally self-immolates in order to ensure the survival of its future progeny. In the case of the *Magicycada*, a type of cicada, its 13- or 17-year long life cycle allows the nymphs to remain underground and safe from predators.

Rome. Did it exhaust its possibilities as a dramatic genre, leaving a host of grand scale theatres empty in its wake? Did the idea of tragedy lie moribund in the accounts of lexicographers in the interim period before it slowly seeped into other genres (such as poetry and fiction), waiting until suitable conditions for stage drama prevailed again? This crux lies at the centre of tragic theory. While some scholars believe that something essentially tragic was lost by the second century BCE, never to be revived (in other words that tragedy could not adapt beyond a certain point), others are willing to see the evolution of tragedy as a series of adaptations and mutations that connect the original form with what exists now.²¹ Thus, instead of subscribing to Nietzsche's proclamation that tragedy 'died' almost in its birth throes, after losing its Dionysian inspiration, or to George Steiner's claim that it met its demise in eighteenth century France, killed off by rationalism, we can instead see tragedy as having undergone various alterations, some of them amounting to radical mutations, but still recognize it as a genre.²² This would not only provide a rational snub to the essentialist argument—tragedy is essentially Athenian and what was not written in ancient Athens is therefore not tragedy—but it would also allow us to look at other, more important issues. On these grounds, to take one small example, the actual presence of a chorus need not be a decisive feature if one can either show that the *function* of a chorus has been replaced by some other element in a tragedy or that it has become vestigial. This approach seems a good deal more sensible than trying to prove that Henrik Ibsen, August Strindberg, Samuel Beckett, T.S. Eliot, Arthur Miller, Tennessee Williams *et alia* did *not* write tragedy because their plays do not conform exactly to the Greek model.

21 The 'decline', if not actual demise of tragedy may be traced back as far as Aristotle, who believed, three centuries after its inception, that the form was no longer as important as it had once been. Since that time, Sophocles and Aeschylus have traditionally been considered as masters of the genre and Euripides as being on a somewhat lower level, a judgement erroneously based on the number of times each won the coveted first prize.

22 See Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy Out of the Spirit of Music*, London: Penguin, 1993. The post-Sophoclean decline and ultimate demise of tragedy is referred to a number of times in the text. See especially, though, Section 11, pp. 54–59. Although Steiner gives no specific date, he makes it clear that modernity offers compensation for tragic fate by removing the concepts of eternal suffering. Rousseauism, in asserting the 'perfectability of man', effectively 'closes the doors of hell' and thereby renders tragedy impossible. George Steiner, *The Death of Tragedy*, London: Faber, 1961, p. 127.

Tragedy is a rather unusual example, precisely because its history is long and discontinuous (at least as drama). However, if we look at some contemporary adaptations, where it is common to see stories move between forms, the continuous and expansive transmission of single tales does not seem at all surprising. *Antigone* replicates, admittedly discontinuously, over two and a half millennia, but no such extensive period of time is needed for tales or their various constituent elements to replicate transgenerically in today's world. In fact, such transmission can take place at the same time or within relatively short periods. For example, the seemingly infinite replications of Jane Austen's novels (as prequels, sequels, conquests, mashups, graphic comics, Jane as vampire, Jane as detective, etc. etc.), the vast number of imitations, audio, cinematic adaptations, iPhone and iPad apps all indicate that Austen is not only big business but seemingly inexhaustible. Fandom, too, has exceeded all expectations. The Harry Potter fandom alone comprises a vast international community that operates its web sites, fan fiction, podcasts, fan art and songvids. Mode and media convergence, first outlined by Ithiel de Sola Pool in his *Technologies of Freedom* and refined and expanded upon by Henry Jenkins in his *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide*, has now made its way into adaptation studies.²³ Indeed, a call for papers for a special issue cites Jenkins and his definition of media convergence as a starting point for potential contributors. Part of that invitation is worth quoting at length here:

For some time now, *Adaptation Studies* has been active in exploring adaptive processes, but we feel that *the impact of a global reservoir of images* as well as *the need to articulate cultural and aesthetic specificity in a climate of low-threshold access* have yet to make their full impact on this academic sub-discipline. We would like to bring into narrow focus the various aesthetic processes and cultural issues at stake in adapting texts in a climate of media convergence and *changing modes of audience involvement and participation*. We specifically seek to address a variety of cross-media

23 Ithiel de Sola Pool, *Technologies of Freedom*, Boston: Harvard University Press, 1983. Henry Jenkins, *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide*, New York: New York University Press, 2006.

transformations that tend to erase borders and barriers both of a temporal and geographical nature [my italics].²⁴

In some cases, 'audience involvement and participation' has taken off on its own. This is especially obvious in the music business where the agents of highly popular performers have invited such sharing for the sake of image promotion and its subsequent financial benefits. At other times, performers, such as The Beatles, finding themselves at the centre of such extreme popularity, actually elected to make themselves accessible to their fans for reasons that were not motivated by profit.²⁵ Although it is not the purpose of this paper to consider the political implications of audience participation in the transmission of culture and cultural products, it has sometimes been shown that power is not all on the side of media giants or governments. The struggle of some segments of Harry Potter fandom with Warner Bros is a case in point, proving that even major companies occasionally have to make concessions to public opinion on the question of who owned what rights to what. Warner Bros made concerted efforts to monitor and close sites that they saw as infringing on copyright phrases from the films but did not reckon on the fans having formed a large and intricate community. When it attacked small sites and individuals it regarded as marginal and therefore powerless, it found itself up against a vast array of fans all over the world.²⁶ On just one site alone, www.fictionalley.org, there are over 60,000 chapters and stories from over 6,000 authors. It also runs the Harry Potter wiki. All 60,000 of these stories are adaptations of elements of the Rowling novels.²⁷ Growing collaboration and participation are the order of the day.

Hybridity is a fashionable term. Commandeered by the automobile industry to prove its new found commitment to going green, it designates a vehicle that uses two different sources of power, most

24 *Adaptation* 4/2011 (Call for papers), Oxford University Press. See http://www.oxfordjournals.org/our_journals/adaptation/adaptationandparticipation.html.

25 A good example would be The Beatles conscientiously answering their own fan mail in 1963–1964 when the prime minister, Sir Alec Douglas Hume, had called them 'our best exports' and 'useful contribution to the balance of payments', Hunter Davis, *The Beatles: The Only Ever Authorised Biography*, London: Ebury Press, 1992 (first pub. 1968), p. 304.

26 See Jenkins, pp. 185–187.

27 See <http://www.fictionalley.org/press.html> (facts about fictionalley.org).

commonly petroleum and electricity. In biology, the terms hybrid and hybridity are considerably more complex, where the former has five distinct meanings and is subject to as many different types of classification within each of them. Without attempting to use biological hybridity as a model, there is nevertheless good reason to investigate the ways in which different genres mingle, and especially in those cases (like the hybrid vehicle) where the various types are visible rather than hidden. For example, the mule is a case of interspecific hybridity, where a cross between a female horse and male donkey produces a strong work animal but one that is sterile. The sterility is ensured by the genes or rather by their number, the horse having 64 and the donkey 62. By analogy, some literary hybrids appear to be highly productive. Satire and romance have traditionally worked rather well together, conscious of each other's excesses and attuned to checking them. Other hybrids, such as the epistolary novel (loosely speaking, a combination of biography and letter writing), have enjoyed some popularity and then fallen out of fashion. A third group, including Lawrence Sterne's *Tristram Shandy* and James Joyce's *Finnegan's Wake*, has left no direct-line descendants, even though various of their innovations and other features have been utilised. Once again, I do not wish to make any exact correlations. Instead, I am suggesting that the vocabulary of science and particularly of biology is highly suggestive and worthy of further exploration.

5. Conclusion

Although Dawkins' memetics has been partially discredited and Hutcheon's revisions of a biological model remain as yet untested by full length studies, the borrowing originally went in the other direction. In his *Origin of Species*, Charles Darwin, who, incidentally, knew nothing about genes or genetics and did not even understand Mendelian inheritance, makes constant reference and comparison to cultural evolution. In Darwin's model, however, competition between variants is essential and that might be difficult to prove in the case of adaptations of Greek tragedy. At the same time, the

process of selection knows nothing of its consequences, having no basic plan from which to develop, and is thus almost entirely pragmatic, its solutions sometimes enjoying success (measured in terms of survival not quality) and sometimes having to face failure. In contrast, literary mutation is hardly random, as Darwin imagined biological mutation to be, but perhaps our tales, poems, plays, films, etc. do carry the literary equivalent of mitochondrial DNA, allowing us to trace the tiniest particles, the smallest of memes, back to early art and the beginnings of the written word. Among the facts discovered about this type of DNA, used incidentally to trace ancient female ancestry, is that it can carry certain kinds of diseases or genetic disorders, such as myopathy or a wasting away of tissue and is literally inbuilt and therefore inescapable (unlike its autosomal and sex-linked inheritance counterparts). That may be as close as one can get to a biological homologue for Greek tragic fate.

ÚTDRÁTTUR

Aðlaganafræði og líffræðileg líkön: Með sérstakri áherslu á *Antígónu*

Rannsóknir á aðlögun bókmenntaverka að kvikmyndum hafa staðið í hálföld og einkum snúist um tryggð kvikmynda við uppruna-verkið, en loksins er aðlaganafræði að breytast í fræðigreini sem snýst frekar um notkun margra mismunandi miðla og færslur milli menningarheima. Undirstaðan er ekki lengur einungis bókmennta- og kvikmyndafræði heldur mun flóknara menningarfræðilegt svið þar sem fræðimenn hafa getað tekið að láni kenningar og fræðihugtök úr víðara samhengi og nýtt sér í rannsóknum sínum. En eins og Linda Hutcheon og aðrir hafa nýlega bent á gæti það líka orðið greininni til framdráttar að líta á augljós tengsl hennar við líffræðileg líkön. Í greininni er fjallað um hvernig skoða má *Antígónu* með því að nota hugtök í erfðafræði og flokkunarfræði í víðara samhengi. Með slíkri nálgun geta rannsóknir á sviði aðlögunar vonandi beinst að því hvernig hægfara breytingar eða óvæntar stökkbreytingar eru alltaf hluti af menningarlegri heild. Á tímum þegar hægt er að miðla verkum með margs konar hætti og klæða þau í alls konar búning halda menn áfram að laga fornar sögur að nýju umhverfi. *Antígóna*, sem eitt sinn var frásögn varðveitt í munnlegri geymd, hefur verið færð í nýjan búning í aldanna rás og upp úr verkinu hafa verið samin leikrit, óperur, skáldsögur, kvikmyndir, teiknimyndir og nútímatónlist, svo ekki sé minnst á hlutverk *Antígónu* í díalektískri hughyggju Hegels. Sumar sögur virðast líkt og ákveðnar lífrænar heildir geta fjölgað sér í hvers kyns umhverfi og stundum svo ört að þær líkjast veirum fremur en hryggleysingjum. Af ótvíræðri darvinskri lífsseiglu er *Antígóna* enn að eignast afkvæmi eftir meira en 2.500 ár.

Lykilorð: Antígóna, þvermiðlun, aðlögun, menningarsamruni, tegundablöndun

ABSTRACT

After half a century of studying the transference of literature to the screen, largely marked by an obsession with fidelity, adaptation studies is finally beginning to emerge as a discipline that focuses on a multiplicity of intermedial collaborations and intercultural transferences. In short, it is moving from a basis in literature and cinema studies to a considerably more complex location in cultural studies. This has allowed the discipline to borrow some theoretical approaches and the terminology from its new context and turn them to its advantage. However, as Linda Hutcheon and others have recently pointed out, adaptation studies might also gain by exploring its obvious associations with biological models. This article examines *Antigone* as a test case for the wider application of the terminology of genetics, heredity and taxonomy. In doing so, adaptation studies will hopefully come to focus on the ways in which slow incremental change or sudden mutation always takes place within a cultural continuum. In an age of increasing intermediality and a wider choice of forms than ever before, ancient tales continue to be adapted to new environments. Once part of an oral tradition, elements of *Antigone* were adapted to a succession of innovatory forms, including the drama, opera, the novel, opera, cinema, the comic and contemporary music, not to speak of the central role of *Antigone* in the formation of the Hegelian dialectic. Like some biological organisms, certain tales appear to reproduce themselves in a multitude of environments, occasionally with a rapidity that bears more resemblance to a virus than a vertebrate. Still spawning successfully after more than two and a half millennia, the survival of *Antigone* is positively Darwinian.

Keywords: Antigone, intermediality, adaptation, convergence culture, hybridity