What Isn't a Cross-Cultural Adaptation, and, If You Know That, Then What Isn't a Cross-cultural Text?

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Abstract   This essay begins by asking why the term 'cross-cultural adaptation' should not be extended from adaptations that cross national borders to adaptations that cross temporal, historical, linguistic, medial, and gendered borders. Unlike some theorists who have attempted to define away the problems that arise when the term 'cross-cultural adaptation' is extended so broadly that it courts ambiguity, circularity, and redundancy by referring instead to 'transnational adaptation', the essay takes those problems as its subject. It suggests that adaptations police and valorize the cultural borders they cross by performing them as borders and the cultures they demarcate as cultures. Since cultures and the borders between them cannot be described without performing them, the essay concludes that the term 'cross-cultural adaptation' is as defensible as any other for describing – that is, for performing – the cultural work that adaptations do.

Keywords   Adaptation. Cross-cultural. Heteroglossia. Monoglossia. Performance.

My title pays homage to Richard Poirier's landmark essay "What Is English Studies, and If You Know What That Is, What Is English Literature?" (Poirier 1971). But my more immediate inspiration is a preview my student Naghmeh Rezaie gave last spring of the paper she presented at the 2018 Literature Film Association conference on cross-cultural adaptations of *White Nights*, Fyodor Dostoevsky's 1848 story of an anonymous narrator's unrequited and ultimately hopeless love for Nastenka, a young woman whom he rescues from harassment. Nastenka cannot get over her own attachment to her grandmother's former lodger, a man who refused to marry her before he left St. Petersburg for Moscow but promised to return a year later. After a series of meetings that take place over four long summer evenings (the white nights of the title), the end of the story finds Nastenka abandoning the narrator to embrace the unexpectedly returning lodger and the pathologically shy and lonely narrator, who wonders if anyone will ever love him but refuses to blame the woman who brought even such fleeting happiness to his life. Not counting *White Nights*, Taylor Hackford's 1985 film about a defecting Soviet dancer who finds himself held against his will in his homeland, the story has been adapted to the cinema at least thirteen

times: as *Le notti bianchi* (1957) directed by Luchino Visconti; *Belye nochi* (1959), a Soviet film directed by Ivan Pyryev; *Chhalia* (1960), an Indian film directed by Manmohan Desai; *Quatre nuits d'un reveur* (1971), directed by Robert Bresson; *Shabhaye Roshan* (2003), an Iranian film directed by Farzad Motamen; three Indian films: *Iyarkai* (2003), directed by S.P. Jananathan, *Ahista Ahista* (2006), by Shivan Nair, and *Saawariya* (2007) by Sanjay Leela Bhansali; *Two Lovers* (2008), an American film directed by James Gray; *Nuits blanches sur la jetée* (2014), a French film directed by Paul Vecchiali; *Velutha Rathrikal* (2015), another Indian film directed by Razi Muhammed; *Belye Nochi* (2017), a Russian remake directed by Tatyana Voronetskaya and Andrey Bogatyrov; and *Prometo no enamorarme* (2018), a Mexican film directed by Alejandro Sugich.

The adaptability of *White Nights* to so many foreign cinemas and cultures raises several urgent questions for Rezaie and other like-minded researchers. Why has it been able to cross so many national and cultural borders? Why has it been particularly attractive to Indian filmmakers, who so far have produced five adaptations of it? What is involved in translating Dostoevsky's very Russian story, rooted in the mores and even the seasonal rhythms of St. Petersburg, for audiences in other cultures? Instead of pursuing any of these perfectly reasonable questions, I wish to interrogate the very notion of cross-cultural adaptation by hypothetically expanding its remit to include adaptations that cover a much wider array of cultures and crossings than the ones between a national literature and a foreign cinema. If cross-cultural adaptations are defined in contrast with monocultural adaptations, I would argue, then we need to look more closely and critically at this definition, because there is no such thing as any monocultural adaptations for them to be contrasted with.

If we agree that Visconti's and Bresson's films based on *White Nights* are cross-cultural adaptations, there is no good reason why we should not call *Belye nochi*, Pyryev's Soviet film adaptation also known as *White Nights*, a cross-cultural adaptation as well. Although the Wikipedia entry on *White Nights*[1] describes *Belye nochi* as "a Russian film", the Wikipedia entry on Pyryev identifies him more precisely as "the high priest of Stalinist cinema", a six-time winner of the Stalin Prize who served for three years as the director of the Mosfilm studios, a director who, for the two decades leading up to *Belye nochi*, was "the most influential man in the Soviet motion picture industry".[2] Soviet, not Russian: by the time Pyryev made his three highly regarded Dostoevsky adaptations, *The Idiot* (1958), *White Nights* (1959), and *The Brothers Karamazov* (1969), Russia had long since become a part of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, a culture

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1 See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/White_Nights_(short_story) (2018-11-08).

2 See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ivan_Pyryev (2018-11-08).

quite Russian in some ways but quite remote from Dostoevsky's Russia in others. And if *Belye nochi* is a cross-cultural adaptation that attempts to translate Dostoevsky's very Russian story into terms palatable to Soviet audiences and censors, then it is clearly a stellar example of Alexander Burry's observation in the Introduction to his coedited collection *Border Crossing* that

> when a Russian literary text, with all of its embedded cultural meanings, is transported to another country or time or both, these meanings are foreign and must be redefined to correspond with the new spatial and temporal territories. In this process of redefinition, new cultural realities will transform those original semantic meanings. (Burry 2016, 7)

If a text's meanings become "foreign" and in need of reculturating whenever that text is "transported to another country or time or both", then any adaptation produced in an historical period later than that of its adapted text, whether it updates the particulars of that text or presents itself as a costume drama, a genre with its own specific conventions often remote from those of the texts it reframes, is a cross-cultural adaptation even if the borders it crosses are temporal, historical, and generic rather than spatial and national.

Following this line of reasoning, any film adaptation of Dostoevsky – or any nineteenth-century writer – is necessarily a cross-cultural adaptation in at least two ways. In adapting his nineteenth-century fiction for twentieth- and twenty-first-century audiences, it crosses temporal borders between what those audiences would consider old and new cultures. And in adapting a well-known literary text to the screen, it seeks to rework a treasured product of literary culture to suit the very different expectations and affordances of cinema culture. Every adaptation ever made, from the pirated stage plays that drove Charles Dickens to righteous indignation to the latest cinematic offspring of the Marvel and D.C. Comics Universes, crosses some kinds of cultural borders in order to reach new audiences by presenting familiar material in new ways. If it did not, there would be no point in producing adaptations at all. So it seems fair to conclude that in a fundamental sense, every adaptation is a cross-cultural adaptation, including adaptations like the 1995 BBC *Pride and Prejudice* television miniseries that critics have categorised as conservative heritage adaptations in contrast with more avowedly cross-cultural adaptations like *Clueless*, the Beverly Hills update of *Emma* that Amy Heckerling directed that same year.

It might seem that the most immediate danger of this position, that such a wholesale broadening of the category would render the term 'cross-cultural adaptation' so vague as to be tautological and therefore useless for practical criticism, could be avoided if we substituted a term like 'transna-

tional' adaptation, which theorists like Robert Iain Smith and Constantine Verevis prefer because it is more specific and better-armed against the kind of all-encompassing redefinition I have described, for 'cross-cultural' adaptation, which Andrew Horton and Stuart Y. McDougal use (Smith, Verevis 2017, 2; Horton, McDougal 1998, 4). Despite its greater specificity, however, I am far from convinced that 'transnational adaptation' does indeed avoid the pitfalls of 'cross-cultural adaptation'. The case of *Belye Nochi* seems equally problematic for both terms. Should the Russian nation in which Dostoevsky wrote really be identified as the same nation as the Soviet nation in which Pyryev released his 1959 film adaptation? Is the 2017 *Belye Nochi*, released in post-Soviet Russia, a transnational adaptation of Dostoevsky's pre-Soviet story or a transnational remake of Pyryev's Soviet film? What about films made under different political regimes within such contested areas as post-colonial Africa, or films made in Poland or the Czech Republic before, during, and after those nations' experiences behind the Iron Curtain, or, for that matter, Shakespearean adaptations produced in the United Kingdom, a political entity that first came into existence only a century after Shakespeare wrote? Instead of trying to answer these specific questions, or the more general question of whether 'transnational adaptation' is a more precise or useful term than 'cross-cultural adaptation' in order to define myself out of the problems raised by the category 'cross-cultural adaptation', I would prefer to consider these problems more closely. What can we learn by examining the implications of the term 'cross-cultural adaptation' as it has been used, presumably in good faith, by earlier commentators?

We might begin by acknowledging the formative role several different kinds of cross-cultural border crossings have already played in the history of adaptation studies. The page-to-screen adaptations that first caught the attention of a critical mass of academics in the second half of the twentieth century, for example, are crossings not only between print media and audio-visual media but between literary culture and what at least the journal *Film Culture* feels safe in identifying in its title as film culture. The critical backlash against film adaptations of classic novels and plays illustrates the ways these adaptations seek to cross from high culture to popular culture, which might otherwise more sharply be opposed as elitist culture and mass culture or, in Dwight Macdonald's terms, as High Culture, Masscult, "a parody of high culture" (Macdonald 1962, 3), whose practitioners, from Edna Ferber to Norman Rockwell to Norman Vincent Peale, "grind out a uniform product whose humble aim is […] distraction" (5), and Midcult, which, through avatars like *Our Town*, *The Old Man and the Sea*, and the Book-of-the-Month Club, "pretends to respect the standards of High Culture while in fact it waters them down and vulgarizes them" (37). More recently, theorists like Carlos Constandinides (2010) and Michael Ryan Moore have examined contemporary adapta-

tions' crossings from print culture to digital culture in order to consider for example "how the protocols of interactive digital worlds complicate and broaden traditional definitions of adaptation" (Moore 2010, 180). Linda Hutcheon and Siobhan O'Flynn have asked whether crossing from a top-down culture defined by the gatekeepers at publishing houses and film studios to a bottom-up culture defined increasingly by fans of particular stories, heroes, or franchises constitute a game-changer: "For adaptation studies, is ours a transitional time or are we facing a totally new world?" (Hutcheon, O' Flynn 2013, xix). Although these cultures may all be rooted in particular technologies of inscription, distribution, and consumption, they clearly cannot be reduced simply to expressions or extrapolations of those technologies; they all have legitimate claims to cultural status.

A recent cycle of essays in queer and transgender theory by the contributors to Pamela Demory's forthcoming collection *Queer/Adaptation* proposes queering texts, like queering gender categories or personal gender identities, as another kind of border crossing. Anyone who thinks it counterintuitive to categorise queering as a crossing of cultural borders might profit by considering the prominence the metaphor already enjoys in the term "crossdressing" and, suitably garbed in Latin, "transgender", along with the fact that lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer cultures are indisputably *cultures* whose deeply contested borders are policed even more rigidly than adaptation scholars' attentiveness to what novels can do that films cannot and vice-versa – witness the Trump administration's recent attempt to define transgender culture out of existence by revising the Title IX definition of gender – and crossed every day despite this policing by individuals seeking identifications with different labels, communities, and cultures. In a parallel development, the contributors to Dan Hassler-Forest and Pascal Nicklas's collection *The Politics of Adaptation* focus on the ways adaptations, by cross the borders between different historical, ideological, and political cultures, incessantly renegotiate "existing social, cultural, and economic hierarchies that can be reaffirmed but also challenged by the new ways in which adaptations are circulated and appropriated" (Hassler-Forest, Nicklas 2015, 1).

A brief consideration of Ingmar Bergman's celebrated film *Persona* (1966) suggests still more borders individuals seeking to express themselves must negotiate, often with devastating consequences. The film's revelation of the increasingly fraught relations between Nurse Alma (played by Bibi Andersson) and her patient, the opera singer Elisabet Vogler (Liv Ullmann), who has suddenly and inexplicably stopped speaking, calls attention to the permeability of a series of personal, psychological, and existential borders we often take for granted: the borders between one individual and the next that popular mythmaking tells us can be breached by sex or marriage or mourning or shared trauma. However, Bergman's film, which shows Alma and Elisabet gradually but radically merging into

each other visually, psychologically and spiritually, suggests those borders are far more fluid. Moreover, there are the borders between individuals and the social, political, romantic, and institutional communities on which they largely depend for a sense of their own identity; the borders between mothers and the babies who grow inside them as part of their bodies until at some point they become their own selves; the borders between the living and the dead whose presence and example continues to inspire them; and the borders between the temporal and spiritual realms that are crossed, as we may think, by vampires, zombies, ghosts, and other spectral presences, by Jesus Christ as the Word made flesh, and by a host of other intimations of immortality.

Persona is not an adaptation of any earlier text, except of course for its screenplay, its director's autobiography, his fascination with psychoanalysis, and his contemporaneous immersion in the writings of Carl Jung. But the wealth of variously successful border-crossings its story dramatises calls to mind still another series of border-crossings among collaborators in all the arts, particularly in architecture and cinema, who merge their interests and skills for the sake of creating a single group project; the border-crossings among audience members, again especially in movie theatres, who make common cause by subsuming their individual personalities and preoccupations in a mass audience that laughs and sighs and screams together on cue; and the border-crossings between consumers and the creators who, in the phrase of Joseph Conrad that D.W. Griffith picked up to describe the infant medium of the cinema, want above all "to make you see" (Conrad 1921, xii).

Which of these many realms whose gaps their participants seek to bridge deserves to be called a culture, and which of these activities deserves to be called border-crossing? The question might seem trivial if so much were not at stake in having one's culture recognised as a culture, with all the responsibilities and rights pertaining thereto, as the rise of the so-called culture wars in the eighties would suggest. To take a single example: the charge 'identity politics' is routinely directed against spokespersons who identify themselves with minority or historically oppressed communities in order to make a case for adopting or rejecting specific public policies. The implication of this charge, which is invariably levelled by disputants outside the community in question, is that it is facile and false to politicise your identification with a specific culture. But the charge backfires as soon as we realise that the force of its critique of identification with an insurgent culture depends on the critics' own membership in a majoritarian culture whose status and perks those objectors take so completely for granted that they forget that they are identifying themselves as members of what they might more forthrightly call the *real* culture – and that all cultural identification is irreducibly political. The historical successes of Roman and French and Hollywood culture remind us that culture and politics

are nothing more or less than two ways of talking about using collective identification to project social values and effect social change.

Thirty-five years ago, Benedict Anderson asserted that nations are "imagined communities" because "the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion" (Anderson [1983] 2006, 6). It is worth recalling that Anderson's highly influential formulation was only one specific application of a more general insight that takes the form of his response to Ernest Gellner's argument that "[n]ationalism is not the awakening of nations to self-consciousness: it *invents* nations where they do not exist" (Gellner 1964, 169; quoted in Anderson [1983] 2006, 6). Rejecting Gellner's implicit distinction between invented and actual communities, Anderson explains:

> [Gellner] implies that 'true' communities exist which can be advantageously juxtaposed to nations. In fact, all communities larger than primordial villages of face-to-face contact (and perhaps even these) are imagined. Communities are to be distinguished, not by their falsity/genuineness, but by the style in which they are imagined. (Anderson [1983] 2006, 6)

Applying Anderson's logic to charges of identity politics suggests that everyone active in politics or communities, including the critics who level charges like 'playing the race card' or 'politicizing their group identities' at others, is practicing identity politics through the simple act of imagining their communities into existence, reifying the identities of those who disagree with them as members of specific communities, and setting those communities against their own equally imagined communities or cultures.

Nor are the majoritarian cultures that condemn insurgents as practicing identity politics nearly as consensual or homogeneous as their spokespersons assume. For every critic who charges that Hollywood remakes of foreign films, for example, illustrate and exacerbate rifts between European and American culture, a journalist lurks nearby ready to remind Americans that they are living these days in a political culture defined by increasingly bitter strife between two warring cultures, each of which considers itself the real culture and its opponents, whether they are stigmatized as condescendingly prescriptive bicoastal intellectual elitists or nostalgic white nationalists who want to Make America Great Again by purging the nation of foreign impurities, as purveyors of identity politics. Any lingering doubts about whether Europeans feel the same way about their national cultures are pointedly addressed by the epigraph Anderson chose for *Imagined Communities*, a passage from *The True-Born Englishman*, the satirical 1701 poem in which Daniel Defoe defended the Dutch-born King William from attacks on his Englishness:

Thus from a Mixture of all things began,
That het'rogeneous Thing, *An Englishman*:
In eager Rapes, and furious Lust begot,
Betwixt a Painted *Britton* and a *Scot*:
Whose gend'ring Offspring quickly learnt to bow,
And yoke their Heifers to the *Roman* Plough:
From whence a Mongrel half-bred Race there came,
With neither Name nor Nation, Speech nor Fame.
(Anderson [1983] 2006, x; see Defoe 1836, 17-18)

If American and English culture are imagined communities, the same is equally true of European culture, whether it is invoked by classroom teachers seeking to introduce students to a cultural tradition descending form Homer, Plato, and Aristotle, or by commentators posing it as a counterweight to Hollywood, perhaps the most forthrightly imagined culture of them all.

We might usefully broaden this perspective still further by recalling the distinction the novelist C.P. Snow made over half a century ago in his lecture *The Two Cultures*. The two cultures Snow counterposed to each other, the humanities and the sciences, were not overtly political but epistemological, educational, and cosmological. Their participants understood the world in such radically different terms, Snow contended, that they could neither talk nor listen to each other. Humanists in particular came in for Snow's withering criticism because of their impatient dismissal of the relevance of elementary scientific theories and principles they clearly did not understand to their shared culture, which they presumably inhabited secure in their certainty, fuelled by their failure to see that "the scientific culture really is a culture" (Snow 1964, 9) and that humanistic culture was *the* culture. The reaction to Snow went a long way toward confirming his diagnosis of humanistic scholars' and educators' self-willed blindness to the value and the vital importance of science. F.R. Leavis, perhaps the foremost literary critic in England at mid-century, was especially, and predictably, apoplectic at the suggestion that he and the humanistic cultural tradition he was proud to represent could possibly profit by considering alternative ways of thinking that might challenge the cultural hegemony of his own vision, which saw "the centre of a university in a vital English School" (Leavis [1962] 2013, 75).

If the humanities are indeed in crisis, as the historian John Harold Plumb, a friend of Snow's, observed as early as 1964 in his edited volume *Crisis in the Humanities*, the principal lesson this episode in ancient history has to teach us is not that the scientists were right and the humanists wrong, or even that all things must pass, but rather that *culture* is a term we always invoke in hypothetical – or, as Anderson would say, imagined – terms, sometimes to bind us together, as the Great Books programs that persist

in St. John's College, Columbia University and the University of Chicago are assumed to do, sometimes to set us apart from rival cultures that we think are fuelled by imperialistic ambitions, agitprop, or identity politics. Depending how you count, the work of decentering majoritarian culture goes back to the Birmingham School of cultural studies, or to Snow's lecture *The Two Cultures*, or to the nineteenth-century battles between the Benthamites and the Coleridgeans, the industrialists and the Luddites. The only observation I have to add to this history is that all cultures, including those of the Luddites and Snow's scientists and the Birmingham School, are *performative* in the specific sense that to name and describe and invoke them is to call them into being, and that there is no other way to do so. Since all cultures are created, not discovered, every time we refer to a specific culture, or culture in general, as a going concern, we are performing that culture, endowing it with power and currency by the very act of naming or describing or invoking it as a system of norms or a touchstone for evaluating other cultures. Although we may regard cultures as archives of norms and values, they are better described as archives of scripts that become effective only in performance. To perform cultures is, in Anderson's terms, to imagine them, though with somewhat less risk that they will be contrasted with the non-imagined cultures Anderson rules are actually nonexistent.

To return to the more specific topic with which I began: calling something a cross-cultural adaptation in order to distinguish it from other presumably non-cross-cultural adaptations is not only eminently defensible but is indeed the only possible way to identify it as a cross-cultural adaptation – a performative category, like all cultural categories, whose ineluctably imaginary basis is aptly indicated by the telltale verb 'identify'. Consider the implications of one such cross-cultural performance: its two characters come from the same St. Petersburg culture. But the city itself, where the Moscow-born Dostoevsky spent much of his life and which he often used as a setting for his fiction, had long been considered a crossroad between Russia and the West. Peter the Great had specifically designed St. Petersburg to put a cosmopolitan, European face on a nativist Mother Russia that continued to shun Europe and persisted in regarding the city as a frontier and an outlier. In addition, the tremulous, timid, nameless narrator, who begins his story by confessing that "although I had been living almost eight years in Petersburg I had hardly an acquaintance" (Dostoevsky 1951, 1), defines himself through his hopeless estrangement from his habitat and clearly feels a specifically cultural division between himself and Nastenka, whose sheltered upbringing by her grandmother reveals a different childhood culture from his, and whose experience of romantic love sets them apart by establishing her membership in a world he can only dream of. And dream he does, in a long, impassioned description of himself as "the dreamer", a third-person account that moves her

to reply, "You describe it all splendidly, but couldn't you please describe it a little less splendidly? You talk as if though you were reading it out of a book" (15). It is a response that confirms at once the distance between him and her, his isolation from the material of his dreams, and even his alienation from his self-created role as "the dreamer". It is sadly logical that the story ends with the narrator's reflections on a letter he receives from Nastenka the morning after their last meeting, after he has watched her go off into the night with her returning lover, a letter that begins: "Oh, forgive me, forgive me! I beg you on my knees to forgive me! I deceived you and myself. It was a dream, a mirage" (47). The romance between them that the narrator has imagined has become so foundational to his identity and his hopes for the future that he responds to the death of his impossible dream by looking desperately around the nondescript lodgings from which his landlady Matrona has finally cleared the spider web he once saw as an image of his life envisioning himself "just as I was now, fifteen years hence, older, in the same room, just as solitary, with the same Matrona grown no cleverer for those fifteen years" (49).

These yawning gaps, which doom the narrator's hopes of romance with Nastenka and even any possibility of emerging from his experience with a more fully integrated self, amount to cultural divisions because the story is so emphatic that the kinds of temperamental, psychological, experiential divisions it dramatises are learned and enculturated in ways that have a formative impact on the characters' beliefs about who and what they are. The effect of the story depends on the audience's sympathetic perception that the narrator, hopelessly alienated from his city, his love, and himself, is both a unique individual and a representative type crying out for identification from audiences who respond to him because of their presumed cultural similarities. It is precisely because of the two characters' simultaneous solicitation and rejection of their identification with cultural categories that Nastenka can ask the narrator, "[H]ow did you find out that I was the sort of woman with whom… well, whom you think worthy… of attention and friendship… in fact, not a landlady as you say?" (8), and the narrator can describe himself as "a type" and explain: "a type is an original, it's an absurd person! […] It's a character" (13).

Even more pointedly than Nastenka, Dostoevsky's narrator is established from the beginning as a liminal figure whose twilight existence estranges him from his city and its inhabitants, and his hopeless dreams of romance. Although *White Nights* is something of an outlier among Dostoevsky's fiction for its ardently idealized view of romantic love, its narrator is a quintessential example of his keen interest in presenting irreducibly divided heroes who are defined by their troubled relation to the emotional, psychological, and conceptual categories that come closest to defining them. In Mikhail Bakhtin's highly influential formulation, Dostoevsky is "the creator of the *polyphonic novel*" defined by "*the plurality of independ-*

ent and unmerged voices and consciousnesses and the genuine polyphony of full-valued voices" (Bakhtin 1973, 4; italics in the original). Because Dostoevsky's heroes are "not only objects of the author's word, but subjects of all their own directly significant word" (Bakhtin 1973, 4; italics in the original), his fiction is heteroglot, and his characters are defined by the warring and incompletely assimilated voices and cultural values they uncomfortably embody. The resulting fictional corpus is therefore carnivalesque and irreducibly multicultural even before it is adapted by other hands, for Dostoevsky's heroes are all incompletely successful adapters of what they fondly believe are their own selves.

Dostoevsky, Bakhtin argues, is a special case in world literature, a triumph of internalised and incompletely inculturated heteroglossia even at the level of individual characters like Ivan Karamazov, Rasknolnikov, Stavrogin, and the nameless narrators of *White Nights* and *Notes from Underground*. But the irreducibly heteroglot nature of his heroes' voices and the notoriously unstable identities they project raise the question of whether there is any such thing as a monoglot text at all. There is no point in looking for such texts among the canon of European novels, since Bakhtin famously pronounced the novel, "the genre of becoming" (Bakhtin 1981, 22), the most heteroglot form because its roots in "experience, knowledge and practice" (15) give it a rapacious appetite for incorporating a wide range of voices, not all of them demarcated by quotation marks, without assimilating them to a single coherent world view. If Dostoevsky's self-tortured heroes make his fiction a textbook example of heteroglossia, much the same could be said for Dickens's carnivalesque attacks on the institutions of Victorian culture, or Thackeray's variously metatextual satires of English history, or Meredith's decorously playful deconstructions of his characters' resolutely blinkered performances of themselves. Nor is it any more likely that we would find such texts in the cinema, a collaborative medium marked, as anecdotal memoirs from Lillian Ross's *Picture* to Julie Solomon's *The Devil's Candy* remind us, by conflicts among the collaborators as fierce as they are unresolved. The franchise adaptations spawned by the tellingly named D.C. and Marvel Universes increasingly bundle competing voices and ideals of superheroes into unstable pickup combat teams incapable of seeing further than their next improbable victory over the forces of evil, and the fanfiction archived in online sites like Fanfiction, Wattpad, and Archive of Our Own elevates heteroglossia into a generative principle.

The presentational genre best suited to monoglot pronouncements might seem to be ritual tragedy – not theatrical comedy, which is more often topical because it is so notoriously sensitive to the shifting winds of cultural change, but tragedies that incarnate Aristotle's recipe of imitating a single action with a beginning, a middle, and an end that reveals the definitive meaning of the entire action. But even a brief consideration of tightly dis-

ciplined dramas like *Antigone*, *Phèdre*, and *A Doll's House* suggests that, although they may move toward moments of privileged resolution – that is the kinds of endings that Aristotle says are "everywhere the chief thing" (Aristotle 1941, 1461) – what they mainly do is stage cultural conflicts, including most notably in these three plays the conflicts between men's and women's ways of thinking about and acting in a sharply divided world. No wonder that Bakhtin himself remarks parenthetically that "tragedy is a polyglot genre" (Bakhtin 1981, 12). Any pretense the endings of Athenian tragedies have to definitive monoglot wisdom is undermined by the fact that so many of them, from *Agamemnon* to *Antigone*, generated sequels and prequels, and the fact that their audience came to theatre expecting to see three tragedies and a farce presented on a single bill of fare.

The genre Bakhtin himself contrasts with the novel is of course the epic, "a genre that has come down to us as already well defined and real" (14), a genre "whose constitutive feature is the transferral of the world it describes to an absolute past of national beginnings and peak times" in which "it is memory, and not knowledge, that serves as the source and power for the creative impulse" (15). Yet this contrast, as Bakhtin acknowledges, is itself performative rather than categorical. Since epic and novel represent absolute types rather than observed realities, it makes sense for him to observe: "In the era of Hellenism a closer contact with the heroes of the Trojan epic cycle began to be felt; epic is already being transformed into novel" (15). Bakhtin's critical performance of the novel as "the sole genre that continues to develop, that is as yet uncompleted" (3), has particular resonance in our time. Because "[t]he novel has no canon of its own, as do other genres", it follows for Bakhtin that "[s]tudying other genres is analogous to studying dead languages; studying the novel, on the other hand, is like studying languages that are not only alive, but still young" (3). Readers approaching Bakhtin today will find these descriptions uncannily accurate, not of the novel, but of the digital universe, whose meteoric rise has relegated the novel to a status very much like the status Bakhtin assigned the epic: a canon of works written in dead languages that cannot compete in immediacy, contingency, or the potential for fruitful and entertaining interactivity with blogs, fan fiction, streaming videos, video games, social media, or whatever digital productions and affordances are lurking around the corner. The most urgent lessons Bakhtin has for contemporary genre theorists are not that the epic is monoglot and the novel heteroglot, or that epic and novel are categorical opposites, but that the invention of the printing press ushered in a centuries-long period of increasingly heteroglot genres and adaptations and that every genre is likely to appear heteroglot compared to the genres that precede it and monoglot compared to the genres that follow.

There is no such thing as a monoglot adaptation, in other words, for at least two reasons. The first is that there is no such thing as a monoglot

text, not even the brief love poem we know as Catullus 85 that begins *Odi et amo* (Catullus 1970, 152-3), or more precisely that what we define as monoglot texts are texts we are performing as counterweights to texts to which we prefer to reserve the label of heteroglossia. The second is that every text, whether or not it is explicitly marked and marketed as an adaptation, depends for its understanding on its audiences' experience of the earlier texts defined as relatively or absolutely monoglot that have put its premises, ideas, and visions of human experience into play. Indeed, the very idea of the monocultural adaptations that would presumably provide a contrasting point of departure for cross-cultural adaptation seems futile, since there would be no economic or epistemological point to producing or consuming them as long as the texts that had provided their own inspiration remained available. Every act of reframing inevitably introduces cross-cultural perspectives. But so does every act of framing, which recasts every novelistically or cinematically observed version of St. Petersburg as a foreign city. Dostoevsky's St. Petersburg is as remote from the city's observed reality as the England of the heritage adaptations broadcast on British television is from the novels of Jane Austen, or indeed as Austen's highly-wrought novels are from the world of Regency England.

Instead of seeking some way to differentiate between cross-cultural and monocultural adaptations, therefore, we would be better-off asking two other questions that would acknowledge more fully the ubiquity of the cross-cultural adaptations that produce what Linda Hutcheon has called "a kind of dialogue between the society in which the works, both the adapted text and the adaptation, were produced and that in which they are received" (Hutcheon 2013, 149). We could replace the binary between monocultural and cross-cultural adaptations by asking whether, when stories travel, to borrow the resonant phrase Cristina Della Coletta uses as the title of *When Stories Travel: Cross-Cultural Encounters between Fiction and Film*, they seek to maintain their identities as far as possible, to assimilate to what they take to be their host cultures, or to challenge the laws and categories under which they were admitted. And we could consider the implications of this analysis for the study of adaptation as a border-crossing practice if we asked how adaptation studies might change if its practitioners acknowledged more candidly the liminal, marginal, political, worldly dimension of both adaptations and the apparently more stable texts they adapted. In one possible application of this second question, we could complicate Hutcheon's distinction between knowing and unknowing audiences by observing that the target audiences for adaptations are always both knowing and unknowing, eagerly anticipating certain features of every adaptation while unaware, or equally eager to disavow their knowledge, of others. Replacing the either/or logic of Hutcheon's analysis with a both/and logic would enable us to put a new spin on her influential definition of adaptation as appealing to the desire for both fa-

miliarity and novelty: given that all texts are more or less familiar simply by virtue of the textual features that appeal to foundational principles of literacy, adaptations are new texts that it suits at least some parties to their production, distribution, and consumption to imagine to be reworkings of familiar texts.

Changing our understanding of cross-cultural adaptation to admit every adaptation and every other text ever created may seem an unhelpfully holistic manoeuvre that risks throwing out the baby with the bathwater. Certainly the costs of changing the ways we think about cross-cultural adaptation would be considerable. Even if we cannot differentiate cross-cultural from monocultural adaptation because there is no such thing as a monocultural adaptation, however, the question still arises how we can best distinguish among the different *kinds* of border-crossing that are currently labelled adaptation and translation, or transnational and inter-medial adaptation, or adaptation and remediation. Answering this question would take me far beyond the orbit of this essay; the best I can do here is suggest that nominal alternatives like 'transnational' and 'intermedial' or 'translingual' and 'intermedial' or 'adaptation' and 'remediation' are not best represented as comprising one of the dualities that have so exercised adaptation and translation scholars, because adaptations, like transla-tions, pastiches, performances, revisions, and indeed all text-making of any kind, can cross many borders without necessarily negotiating any either/or dichotomies. Crossing borders and paying the price in a lack of purity, pedigree, and sometimes even intelligibility, in fact, is their vocation: it is the reason we continue to seek them out, consume them with relish, and even gather in classrooms and chat rooms to discuss them.

If all adaptations are cross-cultural adaptations, why do we call some of them cross-cultural and not others? Every time we label an adaptation a cross-cultural *adaptation*, I would suggest, our performance promotes what we take to be its culture of origin and its culture of reception to the status of *cultures* as well. To call foreign film adaptations, but not Russian film adaptations, of Dostoevsky cross-cultural is to pronounce the national cultures in question as more important, more central, more truly *cultural* than other possible competitors like literary and film cultures or elitist and popular cultures or straight and queer cultures. At the same time, to refer to border crossings as primarily crossings between nations rather than languages, media, or modes of presentation and reception premises that these latter borders are less fraught, less consequential, and less salient than national borders, perhaps because we think that national borders, like rivers and mountain ranges, are naturally given and these other borders only metaphorical because we have chosen to overlook the fact that many other rivers and mountain ranges might well have served as equally natu-ral-seeming borders instead. The example of Benedict Anderson, however, should remind us that although every border can be marked, negotiated,

and crossed in many different ways, all borders, like the adaptations that cross them, are imagined, stipulated, or performed rather than naturally given – a fact that the persistence of adaptation reminds us of every day.

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