Faith in the Faithless:
An Inter(re)view with Linda Hutcheon

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Linda Hutcheon is University Professor of English and Comparative Literature at the University of Toronto and is arguably one of the most prolific of Canadian scholars. *A Theory of Adaptation* (New York: Routledge, 2006) is her ninth solo effort.

   A Theory of Adaptation points out the pervasiveness of adaptation in the current multimedia climate but also shows how the practice has had long and deep connections to literary and cultural practices long before the present. As with elements of the postmodern, the new is not so new after all. Hutcheon is at pains to point out that "there are many and varied motives behind adaptation and few involve faithfulness" (xiii). "Faithfulness" assumes a singular origin, a stable source from which anything that follows must flow. The notion of being faithful has guided many earlier studies of the relations between, say, fiction and film, comics and video games. Her premise is not so much that of Borges or Eliot, where the present re-writes the past but, rather, that the adapted text "challeng[es] the authority of any notion of priority. Multiple versions exist laterally, not vertically" (xiii). Fidelity to the text being adapted is, then, not the issue here.

There is an interesting double movement in this book, perhaps linked to Hutcheon's ongoing love of such "mixed" media as opera. Opera, as anyone who experiences this form in any way knows very well, is often a vexing thing. Its "problem" is that it resembles nothing so much as the bad puppet show in *Don Quixote*. There, the Don knows the story being told so much better than the marionettes; he sees through the bad staging and faulty illusion, the exaggerated emotion. Yet, when the fair damsel is finally at risk, he draws his sword and rushes the stage. In other words, representations of all kinds seem to possess this unaccountable quality, this perhaps all-too-human dimension so resistant to theorization or to "reason."

Hutcheon, then, continues her career-long struggle to understand the powerful relationship between the human and the representational. Hence, she points out that the "'intertextual' or the dialogic relations among texts" are never strictly a "formal issue" (xii). Rather, "[w]orks in any medium are both created by and received *by people*, and it is this human, experiential context that allows for the study of the *politics* of intertextuality" (emphasis in original). For many who work cross-disciplinarily, the interesting moment here is Hutcheon's need to go further than the notion of the intertext has formerly taken us.

The following interview took place over several months during the spring and summer of 2006. On the *English Studies in Canada* website ,readers can find a recorded interview with Linda Hutcheon. (Just follow the links to ESC Radio).

BB How did you come up with the idea of working on adaptations?

LH Anyone interested in postmodernism and parody likely can't ignore adaptation for long. What I realized was that most people worked on literature to film and most did case studies. I like to tackle things across media and across genres, so I thought there might be room for a "theory of adaptation."

BB It strikes me that almost all of your work takes a very optimistic view of things. You continually accentuate the positive. In the present book, for instance, you make it clear from the start that one of your main purposes is to force your readers to recognize the prevalence of adaptations. You also note the almost endless stream of negative descriptors used in regard to adaptations (2–3). Your purpose often seems to be to rehabilitate those

158 | *Bucknell and Hutcheon*

forms or cultural/aesthetic practices which for whatever reason are often sneered at.

LH It's either my postmodern de-hierarchalizing impulse or my Pollyanna personality defect, I suppose.

Maybe both? I can't do much about the latter, but I will confess to a real pleasure in trying to make the culturally denigrated newly appreciated. I enjoyed taking on postmodernism when "pomo-bashing" was the name of the game; ditto for adaptations. Have you ever kept a list of the words reviewers (and critics) use to describe adaptations? Think about it: deformation, desecration, infidelity—very morally loaded rhetoric! After all, Shakespeare transferred his culture's narratives from page to stage and made them available to a whole new audience; we did not begrudge him his creative borrowing. Baz Luhrmann transferred one of these, *Romeo and Juliet*, from page to screen, updating it in the process and arguably making it available to a whole new teen audience; the critics excoriated him for his irreverence and nerve. His film, *Shakespeare's Romeo & Juliet*, was deemed unfaithful to its source, despite using most of the text and action. I ask myself: how useful is this kind of reductive judgemental discourse in determining either the artistic significance of a work or its cultural impact?

I also think it's important for researchers to tackle topics they actually like. The best work is rarely done through scorn and contempt. There are many ways to be a "critic," and not all of them demand a stance of negativity. In fact, as in teaching, the constructive critique can sometimes be the more effective mode. Finding a way to disable the culture of negativity and competition in the academy—at least locally or temporarily—has always been a goal of mine and I suspect it has leaked into my research as well.

BB Speaking about the ongoing interest in stories and their rejuvenated means and meanings, you are at pains to point out that means (media) and rules of structure (genre) are not the only dimensions of stories: "Those means and those rules permit and then channel narrative expectations and communicate narrative meaning *to someone* in *some context*, and they are created *by someone* with that intent" (emphasis in original 26). There are a lot of big words here. Two of the biggest must be the word "human" (all the someones) and the use of "intentionality" when referring to stories. You come back to this in the chapter, "Who (adapts)?, Why (do they adapt)?"

I suppose I raise these terms here since at the end of Chapter 1, and again at the end of the book, you discuss Richard Dawkins's notion of

"memes." These are "units of cultural transmission or units of imitation" (32) which mutate but still survive. Your claim is that "[a]daptation, like evolution, is a transgenerational phenomenon…. Stories do get retold in different ways in new material and cultural environments; like genes they adapt to those new environments by virtue of mutation" (32). The evolutionary metaphor here seems to suggest constant change and also something essential, even natural, which does not change. Do you think stories, or storytelling, is somehow "natural"? Are you concerned that there may be a kind of "essentialism" lurking here?

LH Essentialism might be lurking, I agree, if you see the biology here as a metaphor or analogy and not as a homology. Let me explain. I too saw this potential problem after I'd finished the book and have been working with my brother, Gary Bortolotti, a biologist, on an article that attempts to sort this out. I don't see the (obvious) fact that stories evolve through adaptations as a "natural" analogy; cultural evolution is not natural but is homologous to nature's evolution. By homology, I mean a similarity in structure that is indicative of a common origin; that is, both are under-standable as processes of replication. Stories, in a manner parallel to genes, replicate. The adaptations of both evolve with changing environments. The story of a gypsy named Carmen changed when it moved from Mérimée's nineteenth-century France to Joseph Gai Ramaka's twenty-first-century Senegal, but the story remained both visible and understandable in its new context.

Though stories evolve, they are not natural. Dawkins is clear about this in defining "memes," and, if memory serves, the *Oxford English Dictionary* now defines meme as a self-replicating element of culture, passed on by imitation. That said, I am "arguing" the (equally obvious) fact that humans have told stories—and, more importantly for this book, retold stories—for a very long time. And audiences have enjoyed the retellings. I'm not sure we can understand the phenomenon of adaptation *as* adaptation (my goal in this book) if we ignore this desire to retell (= intentionality) and the pleasure of the retelling (= audience response). The post-Romantic "fidelity discourse" used in adaptation studies that simply shows how the adaptation does or does not reproduce the "source" text seems to me to get at only a very small (formal) part of what is an apparently simple but actually quite complex cultural phenomenon.

BB In Chapter 2, the book goes to some lengths to establish the formal problems of adaptation, and you point out that shifts in media create

opportunities and restrictions in terms of storytelling. You borrow from Gérard Genette to separate "'form' (prose, poetry, images, music, sounds), 'genre' (novel, play … opera), and 'mode' (narrative, dramatic)" (52), then add the interactive to the idea of mode. You then go on to list and to challenge what you consider to be four major clichés about the problems of adaptation. Most of these seem intended to place all but prose narrative at the top of some hierarchy. The clichés are, very briefly: (1) that "[o]nly the telling mode" can truly render "intimacy and distance in point of view" (52); (2) that interiority is best handled by the telling mode (56); (3) that only the telling mode can handle relations between past, present, and future (63); and, finally, (4) that "Only telling (in language) can do justice to such elements as ambiguity, irony, symbols, metaphor, silences, and absences…. These are *not* translatable in showing or interactive modes" (emphasis in original 68).

I wonder if you could say more about the sources for these clichés and then elaborate a little more on them.

LH With the advent of new media, new possibilities for storytelling always appear: arguably, the cinematic version of *The Lord of the Rings* had to wait until the new digital technologies were invented to do justice to its fantasy world. But the advent of interactive media has given us not only new means but also new modes of being involved with or engaging with stories. Narratologists taught us early on that showing and telling were not the same thing, but this opposition needed expanding once video games and the new media art works arrived on the scene. However engrossing reading and film viewing are, neither is as immersive, or at least I should say that neither is immersive in the same way, as a video game is. When adapting across these modes the narrative *must* change, and does, of course. As Marie Laure Ryan puts it, in her essay called "Narrative and Digitality: Learning to Think with the Medium," we have to learn to think through or with the new medium, not just use it. This is doubly so with adaptations across media.

That said, adaptation theory and criticism have both often concentrated on the evaluative rather than the descriptive: the novel is better than the film; not, the film, as a performative mode, has different possibilities and limitations than the novel. I wanted to get away from that kind of falsely evaluative discourse, so I decided to test some of the truisms (or what I called clichés) of that discourse. Since that particular kind of language is often used by literary folks, of course, it is no surprise that literature comes out on top of any hierarchy of media. As Robert Stam, a very astute

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theorist and critic of literature and film relations, has remarked, literature will always be superior for these people, in part because of its priority as an art form but also because of an interesting western European cultural mix of logophilia and iconophobia—our culture has loved words and distrusted images for a long time.

So what I tried to do was test each of the truisms you list—truisms that I had gleaned from reading lots of adaptation theory and criticism—against actual texts. Modernist fiction was the focus, in part because the accepted wisdom is that it is the most difficult to transfer to any other mode of engagement. Intimacy, point of view, interiority, temporal shifts, ambiguity, metaphor, irony—these are the commonly understood hallmarks of the modernist novel. Not one of these, it would seem, is easy to convey in an interactive or performative mode. Yet, I hope to have shown that this is not, in fact, the case, in other words, that operas, musicals, films, plays, and even theme parks have managed to adapt precisely these things, and often brilliantly. This is why I feel we always have to test theory against practice or, better yet, derive theory from practice.

BB It seems to me that we have come to expect that film or opera will translate interiority, say, or point of view by means of sound, or music, or editing. In other words, we know the conventions of interiority, or of temporal ordering in these modes, even though we no longer use the word "conventions." Do the clichés you speak of really pertain anymore?

LH That's where I began too, but writing on adaptation (including reviews, by the way) often proves us both wrong. Reviews of an opera adaptation of a novel (for example, *The Great Gatsby* or *Billy Budd*) will routinely lament the fact that the public, spectacular, and highly artificial form of opera can't pretend to convey the subtlety and nuance of prose fiction's depiction of the inner life of characters. They rarely note that those conventions you mention (for example, the operatic aria) do indeed allow for that depiction, and often very subtly, though differently (not better, not worse, but differently). And they can do more, sometimes, rather than less. Opera is a good example of a form that uses the power of music both to provide different meaning and to evoke emotional responses. Film adaptations of fiction, in my experience, are constantly reviewed in this negative way and have been for a long time. Virginia Woolf did a wonderful hatchet job on early film adaptations in the 1920s, but the same has been said recently about the new adaptations to the screen of *Beowulf* or *Tristam Shandy*. Woolf

called literature the "prey" and "victim" of the parasitic new medium; today's reviewers are no more kind.

BB I am thinking here of something you say about the organization of time across the various modes. You suggest that "[t]he 'instantaneity' made technically possible by remote communications systems (telephone, radio, television) is new to the last century, and it is this that makes possible our acceptance of the illusion that a film is happening in the present and that we are present as it happens" (67). Do we really think this when we watch a film? Isn't its "presentness" an illusion we accept as part of its conventions?

LH Indeed—that's precisely how conventions work, no? We certainly do *not* think about these things, but we also do not think, Hey, this isn't really happening at this moment; I'm just watching something that was filmed earlier. Conventions work precisely by making us *not* think such thoughts. Film can play on this. Stage productions do too but obviously in a totally different sense of "presentness" and totally different conventions. Media shifting relies on shifting conventions as much as anything else.

BB I wonder, too, about one of the critics you quote at some length. Lev Manovich, in discussing computerized films, claims that, in your words, "time and memory can actually be spatialized through montage" (67). Then, Manovich makes this claim: "In contrast to the cinema's screen, which primarily functioned as a record of perception, the computer screen functions as a recorder of memory." Could you say more about what he means here, and why computer montage would necessarily be so much different from filmic montage?

How are we to tell whether or not we interpret according to formal, or modal, conventions and not just more interpretive clichés?

LH As I understand the kind of computer montage Manovich is speaking of, all the images are present at once (rather than being presented consecutively as in regular film) and can be accessed by both creator and receiver in any chosen order, or all at once in a composite image (again totally differently from regular film where the order of image perception is determined by the director and is fixed—hence it's a record of perception). I would agree that we are still dealing with learned perceptions (or new ones that have to be learned)—another word for conventions—but I do think there is something more than an interpretive cliché at work here. The

Inter(re)view | **163**

different medium allows different structural forms and different modes of engagement. One is not better than the other—simply different. I'm really trying to get away from that evaluative discourse that hampers adaptation theory—and the appreciation of adaptations *as* adaptations.

BB In Chapter 3, you enter the interesting territory of who adapts and why. You point out that especially when stories move from the telling to the showing or interactive modes, the notion of a single adaptor is very hard to discern. Directors, costume designers, lighting specialists, actors, singers, musicians—all play a role. You do make clear that, say, in the case of film, the director is responsible for the adapted text in a way that the other artists on a film shoot are not: that is, they are more interested in the way a film becomes an "autonomous work of art" (85).

LH Well, another way to think about this issue is through the increased distancing from the adapted text. The screenwriter is obviously the closest and, as Spike Jonze's ironic film, *Adaptation*, spoofed so well, has to negotiate the transposition of the story from one medium to another by a kind of medium-translation (which can never be "literal," just as any other translation cannot be). Seen from this perspective, the director, in a way, adapts the screenplay, not the adapted text. And, arguably, the cinematographer, the actors, and all the others are adapting the director's version or vision of the screenplay. So, we have not only multiple adapters but multiple adaptations, in fact. Filmmaking is obvious a collaboratively creative act. The screenwriter's adaptation could get changed mightily by not only the director and the actors but also the editor. One critic put it nicely when he said that what we see in the cinema is really the studio's adaptation of the editor's adaptation of the director's adaptation of the actors' adaptation of the screenwriter's adaptation.

BB Is this notion of who the adaptor is made even more complex with the new technologies?

LH Indeed it is. Reader response theory and spectatorship theory have taught us that readers and audiences are never passive receivers but are in their own right co-creators of works. But immersive new technologies have upped the ante on this active role by making the receiver into a "player"—in a video game, for instance. The theorizing of video games is interesting for its reconfiguration of the role of the receiver into an active adapter as well.

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But there are so many people involved in the creation of any work in the new media, and at so many different technical as well as creative levels, that the model for adaptation/creation is a lot closer to that of film, with its multiple adapters.

BB The new auteurs seem to be the writers of graphic novels, but these people are not always the artists. Why is it that the writers get so much more fame, and likely fortune, than the artists do?

LH I've always found that curious, to be honest. To find an answer, I'm tempted to go back to Stam's idea of our culture's built-in iconophobia and logophilia: we value the written word more than the image. Hence the writer is more important than the artist. If you think about illustrations in novels, as Kamilla Elliott has in her book, *Rethinking the Novel/Film Debate*, and their equal denigration, you can find a parallel, if not a direct analogy. The story is somehow seen as the creation in words; the images are support, mere illustration. But, in fact, in the graphic novel the two dimensions are much harder to separate: our sense of the story's "heterocosm"—its visible world, its characters, even its action—is totally determined by the visual, not the literary (which is usually reduced to dialogue and some information). Some of the most powerful adaptations in the form of graphic novels use "silent" panels—no words. I'm thinking of those panels in Chester Brown's adaptation of the history of Louis Riel where he lets us see and feel Riel's moral dilemma, rather than telling us about it verbally. Very powerful.

BB Yes, I wonder if this is changing, given the growth in popularity of the graphic novel and of various virtual media.

In the section of this chapter which deals with why people adapt, you do mention the economic "lure" as you call it. Large entertainment corporations are not sentimental about adapting things, and, as you point out, both the writers of the adapted text and the adaptor him/herself rarely have much influence on the final production (if, as is usual, they are working from the telling mode to the performative). It seems to me one would be better off being a parodist, since, as you point out, in u.s. law at least, they have the right to "comment critically on a prior work" (90), an option that, legally, adaptors do not have—at least not without paying for it.

LH Well, it's certainly safer to be a parodist—you have some recourse before the law if you are accused of plagiarism or copyright infringement.

Inter(re)view | **165**

You may recall the celebrated court case a while back when the estate of Margaret Mitchell went to court to try to prevent the publication of Alice Randall's *The Wind Done Gone*, a sequel/adaptation/parody of *Gone with the Wind* told from the point of view of a mixed-race slave. For the courts, adaptations are derivative works, but what is also interesting is that it is only the actual wording that can be copyrighted. The story cannot be. Expression, not content, is deemed "ownable," and so adaptations are rarely prosecuted successfully. It seems hard to prove what the law calls "substantial similarity" on these literal grounds. In the case of a film, after all those adapters we talked about earlier get involved, there is rarely anything that is literally the same.

Of course, most adaptations are openly adaptations: they claim to be "based on" or "inspired by" a prior text—and to do that, they have had to pay for the privilege, as you note. If they don't say this, then they are open to accusations of copyright infringement/plagiarism, to which parody is the only effective defense, *if* critical intent can be proved. In fact, I'd define an adaptation as a deliberate, announced, and extended revisitation of another work.

Adaptations are both spawned by and controlled by capitalist desire for gain, of course. The law determines that if an artist can prove financial damage through unauthorized or unremunerated appropriation, a suit can be filed. Unfortunately for most, it is more often the case that an adaptation will increase the sales of the adapted work. Film adaptations of novels are the best examples: the publisher will reissue the novel with stills from the film on the new cover. They know that people often go back to the adapted text (or go to it for the first time) after seeing an adaptation.

BB You make an interesting point later in the chapter when you suggest that intentionality is a term largely lost in literary studies, for a variety of reasons that go back to W. K. Wimsatt. But you say that in the case of adaptors, especially since they really don't get a great deal of material gain from their adaptations, intention has to be "seriously considered by adaptation theory, even if this means rethinking the role of intentionality in our critical thinking of art in general" (95). You of course do not mean that intentions should be a primary means of interpretation, do you?

LH No, not at all. I'm talking about motive here. Art historians and musicologists have no trouble turning to intentionality to determine why an artist might have chosen to create in a certain way—both in personal terms and in terms of aesthetic history. Thanks to Wimsatt and, later, Barthes

and Foucault, literary studies has made this *verboten* or, at least, suspect. But the New Critics and the poststructuralists were both responding to precisely your point, using intention as the primary means of interpreting the meaning of a work. On the contrary, I'm trying to get at the problem of intention through motive, not meaning. If we don't consider why an adapter might choose to adapt a particular text (and in a particular medium and/or genre), then we risk missing a lot of important information that can contribute both to our understanding of adaptation as a cultural phenomenon and also to our comprehension of particular adaptations. I think we can learn much by knowing why as well as how David Henry Hwang changed the narrative details of the adaptation of C. Y. Lee's novel, *The Flower Drum Song,* by Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein. And what we learn is much about the aesthetic, social, political, historical, and racial contexts of both the adaptations and the adapted work.

BB Your longest examination in this chapter (Chapter 3) is of the various adaptations of the historical events which eventually inspire Poulenc's *Dialogues des Carmélites* (1954). There you explore the variety of reasons and intentions and, of course, interpretations of adaptors and audiences in different historical and cultural moments. So, does a subject have to cohere in order for there to be an adaptation or an interpretation?

LH Cohere? Not in the sense that the adapter and audience have to be in agreement or in sync with a story or subject. I try to show in that discussion the variety of motives—political, personal, artistic—that prompted each adapter of the Carmelites' historical story (and there were many) to want to tackle his/her particular adaptation in their particular mode. Each had very particular and very different reasons for being attracted to this story—and the reasons depended on everything from the political situation in a particular country (Germany or France), to personal issues of faith or physical illness, to the aesthetic challenge of writing in a new medium and genre.

BB In Chapter 4, you raise the interesting issue of audience and how much it has to know in order to appreciate the adaptation as adaptation. There is certainly pleasure in recognizing a story—as you suggest, the "palimpsestuous" relationship between texts. But as you also note, there is no need for an audience to recognize that the story is adapted.
LH If we see a musical and don't know that it is adapted from a film or a play, then we experience it as we would any other musical—no experiential

palimpsest exists. The work stands on its own. But *all* adaptations have to stand on their own, in this sense. If we have to know the adapted text to understand the adaptation, it's likely a total failure as a work of art. If the audience does know the work it is adapted from, on the other hand, there is an extra layer, if you like, of meaning or of hermeneutic experience—what I think of as a palimpsest. Like ritual, the repetition of stories (in adaptations) seems to bring pleasure, comfort, a fuller understanding, and perhaps even a sense of confidence that comes with knowing what's going to happen next (if not quite how it is going to happen). Adaptations are repetitions with difference, so the piquancy of surprise mixes with the comfort of familiarity. The adapted work oscillates in our memories with the work we are experiencing.

BB Clearly, if they do recognize an adaptation as an adaptation an audience will have a different response to the adaptation. But they will also have their own response to the new medium or mode into which a piece is adapted. You discuss this in Chapter 4, where you note that "[g]enre and media 'literacy,' … can be crucial to the understanding of adaptations *as adaptations* (emphasis in original 126). Can an audience's expectations of one mode conflict with their knowledge of and response to another?

LH If I watch Sally Potter's adaptation of Virginia Woolf's *Orlando* and think about it wearing my film buff's hat, I'm likely to see it primarily in terms of medium—that is, as an adaptation of the film style or tradition of a generation of British historical directors like David Lean and Derek Jarman. This could, I suppose, conflict with my literary perspective, that would make me see it as an adaptation of Woolf's text. But I suspect I would actually just have a richer rather than a contradictory or conflictual experience. If I see Kenneth Branagh's cinematic *Henry V* as an adaptation of Shakespeare's play, I'll read it differently than I would if I see it as an adaptation of Laurence Olivier's earlier film version. If both intertextual contexts are in play, my reaction is likely to be fuller, though. But artists can't assume either kind of knowledge, I suspect. This is most obvious with interactive new media art works. I remember discovering that one artist was really unhappy with how spectators interacted (or didn't) with his computerized work in a gallery, but he didn't stop to think that most people only interact publicly with computers in the form of information kiosks or ATMs. We have to learn how to engage with new media in a new context; that has always been the case.

BB Early in the book you suggest that the relationship between the adapted text and the adaptation is not hierarchical; that is, you say that "[a]daptation is repetition, but repetition without replication" (7). In the Preface, you suggest that "[m]ultiple versions [of a story] exist laterally, not vertically" (xiii). But can this lateral-ness lead to problems? You note, for instance, that the actual robber whose story is told in the film *Dog Day Afternoon* (1975) in fact borrowed heavily from the film to tell his own story (16). So, my question is: Does this lateral-ness leave the door open for confusions about "origins," when, especially in the case of history, these origins can be crucial?

LH What my biologist collaborator would call the "phylogeny" or evolutionary history of an adaptation is obviously of interest and importance to how we interpret it *as* an adaptation (though not, I'd argue, to its aesthetic evaluation). When the adapted text is an historical account, we have to remember that it too is a human construct, a narrativization of what "really happened." The latter recedes even in historical accounts, for we can usually only access it through remaining textualized fragments (archival materials) or narratives (by historians). The events of the past are made into historical facts through narrative placement or what Hayden White calls emplotment. When these written historical accounts are in turn adapted to other media and perhaps genres, or turned from factual to fictional, we move even further away. In the example you mention, however, that's the point: the context in which the robber retells his story is a film made by an artist who is exploring precisely the power of cinematic representation to manoeuvre or even construct memory.

Your question about the importance of origins I take as an ethical one and agree with you that this lateralness could be problematic were we to want to/need to discover the "origin." But usually in adaptations, the "origin" is stated (as we saw earlier, for legal reasons). Parody or postmodern historical fiction are much more problematic than adaptations, I think, here.

BB I am leaning in two directions here. Recently, there seems to have been a rash of high-profile plagiarism cases or cases where the origins of a work were not what the author suggested. So, while it is clear that often young students are confused about the notion of original work, and original research, it is not only they who are in the dark about these issues. Now, I know you have done some work on Art Spiegelman's *Maus*, and so, while he makes no attempt to capture the original of his father's story

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of the Holocaust, Spiegelman would not say there was not an important original story. What drew you to that book anyway?

LH My initial attraction was to the self-reflexivity Spiegelman uses as an ethical strategy. But your point is related to your last question about history, actually. After publishing the graphic texts, Spiegelman produced a CD-ROM that offered the entire oral recordings of his father's story, as well as all of his sketches, photographic images of the camps, and so on. In other words, the historical basis of his story was reasserted. But in *Maus* itself, he foregrounds the very real ethical problems of trying to tell the story of another person, especially a story of a trauma that cannot perhaps be told, much less understood. But he also foregrounds the telling of it through both words and images (in what he calls "comix") that were from a cultural context that is not usually associated with such serious historical and moral topics.

BB You note, in regard to our interactions with computer game adaptations, that "we are involved even more [than in filmic or dramatic adaptations] directly, physically and mentally, as we concentrate intensely and respond physiologically" (130). I wonder though if this is entirely true. I know that I react physically to both reading and watching films or television shows. Could it be that video games actually displace the body too?

LH And the hair stands up on the back of my neck when an operatic soprano hits a high C! I know what you mean about the physical impact of reading and viewing, and I'm careful to say in the book that all three modes of engagement are interactive. The difference is in degree of immersion. If you could watch my nephew play video games—with his entire body and mind—you wouldn't talk about displacing the body, believe me. It's more a total engagement of mind and body. There's a participatory excitement—intense concentration, an engaging of kinaesthetic skills and real competitive energies—that often has strong physical reactions (involuntary as well as voluntary). What is interesting is that this kind of gaming experience is private and personal. He's alone with his computer, sitting close to the screen so that the game world takes up his entire visual field, and, since he's wearing earphones, the sound dominates his world. He controls that world and his movement through it on the screen. At once director and protagonist, he is engaged differently than the spectator at a play or the reader of a novel. But the body is not displaced!

BB Or, could it be, that since I was not raised within the conventions of video to the same degree as many young people, I might simply not completely understand (am not literate in) the mode? I may be inexperienced in the varieties and kinds of what you call "immersion" in certain modes.

LH I certainly am not, so I can answer for myself, if not for you. To work on this question, I interviewed young video-gamers and read up on the critical literature on it. No matter how much I play a video game, I do not have the physical skills to do it as well as some of the experienced gamers like my nephew, and so my degree of immersion is minor compared to theirs, always interfered with by my frustration at my physical ineptness. But I can sense the difference when I watch and talk with them about their experiences, their total involvement (physical, psychological, cognitive, perceptual) in the game world.

BB In Chapter 5 you suggest that in many cases adaptations seem to hold on to stereotypes when it comes to characters and themes. Then, in your conclusion, you say that adaptations often depend on a kind of tension between repeating old stories (stereotypes intact) and also changing these stories. Are adaptations, then, necessarily conservative? Or is it audiences?

LH We repeat but we also change those old stories, so adaptations (and their audiences) are simultaneously conservative and renovating. Most of those renovations come at the level of the stereotyping, of course, since cultural politics change over time: the *femme fatale* or the *Don Juan* figure can be recognizable in their modern adaptations, but their historical meaning will have shifted with the changes in sexual politics. Or so I would certainly hope!

BB Finally, what is your next project?

LH For the last while, I've tended to alternate collaborative and solo work, so I am planning to finish an operatic/medical/cultural project begun with my partner, Michael, on creativity, older age, and "late style." Then, in my own neo-late-style manner, I'll probably tackle some other large, denigrated underdog of a subject: reviews? Who knows?

Who knows?