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FROM NOVEL TO FILM ADAPTATION: PROGNOSTICATION OF POSTMODERN RUDIMENTS IN ALICE WALKER'S *THE COLOR PURPLE*

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ABSTRACT

This research explores the differences between Steven Spielberg's film adaptation and Alice Walker's novel The Color Purple, using Linda Hutcheon's A Theory of Adaptation to highlight the differences between the two works. This research is qualitative in nature. It looks at how the adaptation process changes or reframes the book, especially about Black literary themes, resistance, and reconstruction. To evaluate the film's accuracy, the study uses qualitative, descriptive, analytical, and applied methodologies, as well as Karen Gocsik's Writing about Movies and Hutcheon's theory, among other sources. Analysis shows notable variations in visuals, costuming, and milieu representations, with the movie focusing on subplots to appeal to a wider audience. The results shed light on how adaptation decisions affect audience interpretation and point to the need for more investigation into how these choices affect the retention or modification of original themes, which may eventually be extended to other literary works that have been made into films.

Keywords: Film, Adaptation, Theory, Postmodernism, Variations.

Introduction:

One way to think of a film adaptation is as the partial or complete transfer of a story to a feature film. It is thought to be a form of imitation. From a film adaptation perspective, novels are frequently used to adapt feature films. Nonfiction (including journalism), such as autobiographies, dramas, scriptures, historical records, and comic books, are also adapted for film. Adaptation is a significant field of study for language and literature scholars, challenging traditional narratives. This study applies Hutcheon's *Theory of Adaptation* to analyze the film adaptation of Walker's *The Colour Purple* in a postmodern context. Film adaptation can take various forms, including theatrical, television, comic books, documentaries, cartoons, and religious books.

Film storytelling enables cross-cultural communication and the expression of ideas. Adaptations to multiple audiences that reflect cultural traditions can convey common themes. Even though human

values and lessons are repeatedly presented in theatre, movies, television, books, and novels, they still tend to persist and find a new home in an intellectual context. The practice of adaptation is not new. Creators, directors, writers, arrangers, fashioners, and choreographers have been adjusting material since civilizations initiated to modernize. However, "new ideas and information are welcome in our current culture" (Kinney, 2013).

Anderson contends that "We are at the end of what is called the modern age, just as antiquity was followed by several centuries." Time never continues as before, thus are the conditions in our lives. The change from innovation to postmodernism denotes a shift from faith in genuine truth and stupendous stories to distrust, holding that significance is emotionally and socially developed. Hutcheon verifies that postmodernism is a development that is exemplified by checked subjectivism, incredulity, relativism, or a boundless idea of reason

contending and holding financial and political power. Postmodernism arose in the late 20th century. It looks at the political and social connections that safeguard neo-imperialism and expansionism. It incorporates the cultural, political, and social stories of individuals. The distinction between post-modernism and post-modernity is a major concern of Hutcheon. "the indication of a philosophical and social period or condition, particularly the age or condition in a world in which we live" (Politics, 1989) is what she interprets from the former. She contrasts the latter with social interpretations of many kinds, such as "literature, architecture, film, dance, music, video, and painting and so on". Hutcheon argues that the ethnic diversity of socio-historical and aesthetic domains has led analysts to develop diverse postmodern theories.

Hutcheon examines postmodernist artistic works across various media and genres and their relevance to today. Hutcheon identifies postmodernism as a distinct form of modernism within a larger system of cultural work. Hutcheon exemplifies postmodernism's ability to manage images in a world dominated by photography. Hutcheon defines postmodernist art as the denaturalization of the natural and the questioning of the distinction between history and fiction. Additionally, it helps us comprehend the effects of our historical knowledge, such as the denaturalization of gender and sex and the individualistic aspects of the past and present. These kinds of tactics, however, make it easier for postmodernist works to continuously assess postmodernity.

Furthermore, in looking at the depiction of expounding on films, an outline by Karen M. Gocsik is a masterfully supportive hotspot for film variation. Gocsik declares that it is incredibly careful to understand that movies are a dependable method for data. One can improve unity comprehension of a genuinely new thing because of a legitimate portrayal of society through the film interaction. In disparity, films can't be examined after a solitary sight. Notwithstanding that, people need to take alternate points of view to get an understanding, like watching video shots, setting, exchanges, lighting, camera development, sound, and any remaining things over and over. In addition, a film can likewise be inspected with the help of social translation. "It is a way to deal with film concentrates in which one can undoubtedly assess unmistakable bits that are connected with film studies, especially those that have a place with film study, photography, sound, and setup" (Gocsik, 2016).

Literature Review

Adaptation is a crucial area of study for language and literature scholars as it disrupts traditional narratives. The objectives are to address points of contention and controversy, raise various questions, and solve problems. It refers to using mutual perspectives to identify and address simultaneous effects. This study applies Hutcheon's *Theory of Adaptation* to analyze the film adaptation of Walker's *The Colour Purple* in a postmodern context. Film adaptations can take many forms, including those from novels and mythologies, documentaries, comic books, theatre, television, and religious literature.

Previously, Steven Spielberg adapted *The Colour Purple* into appropriation in 2009. Moreover, Bilal Zayoun has applied Queer and Adaptation Theory in the Film *The Colour Purple*, published in 2024. Furthermore, *The Colour Purple* came into discussion in Nicole Hodges Presley's Theater Journal.

Research Objectives

- To understand how adaptation makes a difference to the original text

- To identify the elements that make a film adaptation worth considering
- To highlight the importance of adaptation in literature

Research Questions

1. How are adaptations different from the original text?
2. How does the film "*The Color Purple*" identify postmodern elements?

Research Methodology and Theoretical Framework

The film adaptation of Alice Walker's novel *The Color Purple* is examined in this study using a qualitative methodology. *A Theory of Adaptation* by Linda Hutcheon serves as the critical framework. With a focus on comparing the central themes, characterization, and narrative structure between the original work and Steven Spielberg's film adaptation, the study is distinguished by its descriptive and analytical nature. This study compares the novel and the movie, supported by secondary sources such as Karen Gocsik's *Writing about Movies* and Hutcheon's *A Theory of Adaptation*, in addition to other scholarly works and online sources. With an emphasis on elements like gender representation, cinematography, visual style, costumes, and setting, the study looks at how the movie adaptation interprets and changes the original narrative.

This study attempts to understand how the novel's ideas of resistance, reconstruction, and Black literary portrayal are preserved, altered, or omitted to accommodate mainstream film audiences by analyzing the choices made during the adaptation process. The current approach provides a comprehensive framework for assessing how well the adaptation maintains the source material's historical, cultural, and thematic authenticity.

Analysis and Discussion

For creative innovation in film adaptation and narrative experiences, Hutcheon's fundamental contexts and viewpoints on the allure of adaptation, intentionality in adaptation, transcultural adaptation, and the joys of adaptation emerge as guiding principles. Hutcheon claims that subsequent elements like recognition, modification, upkeep, and interpretation are what make adaptation appealing. Additionally, the idea and procedure of adaptation aid in our comprehension of both Walker's *The Color Purple* film adaptation and the original text. Walker's famous book *The Color Purple* has been adapted into a movie; as a result, certain changes take place during the adaptation process, including in the areas of cinematography, gender, space, place, arts, visuals, wardrobe, and location. The allure of adaptation alludes to human desires and the inability to live without them. Without any limitations, the desires of the characters in Walker's *The Color Purple* change. One character in the book puts up a fight against the other. For this reason, desire-based power shifts from one character to another, Celie to Shug Avery and then Celie to Nettie, for example.

Hutcheon defines intentionality in adaptation as the ability of thoughts to represent something other than them. According to Hutcheon, subconscious states such as perceptions, beliefs, and desires are the primary sources of intentional behavior. Hutcheon argues that adaptation can enhance the creative process by providing a perspective on the main action, even if a person is unable to express it verbally. Adaptation involves duplicating and reproducing elements from novels and films. In its original form, it is challenging to practice. The story's protagonist, Celie, also develops feelings for her husband's mistress, Shug, as a result of this deliberateness. The sexual intimacy between "Celie and Shug" forces Celie to contend with her

prior quiet and seclusion; she can advocate for herself and resist problems. As a result, Celie and Shug Avery have a satisfying sexual relationship; in this case, sex is neutral and solely meant to satisfy one's desires.

In addition, Celie has endured female oppression at the hands of men all of her life. However, her life has improved with Shug Avery's assistance; she is now able to speak out against injustice and the violence she has experienced throughout her life. Shug gradually transforms Celie's life. According to Shug, "God created sex so that people could enjoy life" (Walker, 1982). Thus, it was the first time Celie had ever been tempted in her life. One can observe that Celie's feelings for Shug are immediate and intense. Shug Avery is drawn to Celie because she compares herself to men. Walker discusses how Shug arouses Celie's sexuality in ways that are unique to women, even though she is by no means masculine. According to Hutcheon's *A Theory of Adaptation*, decisions made during the adaptation process take into account a variety of factors, including genre, political involvement, and historical context. These decisions are made in light of historical, ideological, and cultural aesthetics as well as innovative and informative contexts.

The conversion of one culture to another that is not new is the focus of transcultural adaptation techniques. However, because these take place within cultures and societies, they become more diverse over time. The primary characters, Celie and Shug, in *The Color Purple*, might also represent a transcultural adaptation. The novel's narrative clarifies Afro-American culture especially that of women who endure physical and sexual abuse as well as oppression based on their gender. In addition to being used by another man to look after his children and satisfy his sexual desires as a domestic maidservant, Celie first endures years of sexual harassment from her stepfather. First of all, Celie experiences various forms of violence from her stepfather before her marriage. In addition to his commitment to abuse, her stepfather (Pa) also contributes to her emotional disabilities by never showing her any respect as a human being. Second, Celie is once more the victim of male aggression after getting married. She is treated harshly by her husband, "Mr. Harpo sat his daddy because he beat me. Mr. says, Cause she, my wife. Plus, she stubborn. All women good for he doesn't finish. He just tucks his chin over the paper as he does. Remind me of Pa" (Walker, 1982). It is clear that Celie has had difficult times throughout her life; she has endured a great deal of punishment and has become lifeless as a result. After both sisters, Celie and Nettie, are split up at a young age, Shug Avery becomes Celie's friend and confidante, boosting her self-esteem. Shug Avery and her father are very different from one another; she is a confident and seductive singer, while her father is a preacher. The goal of transcultural adaptation is to alter ethnic and gender diplomacies. Nevertheless, both the original story and the movie's adaptation alter things and cultures.

Hutcheon gives *The Pleasures of Adaptation* a lot of weight in her book *A Theory of Adaptation*. Hutcheon talks about how using one's work can increase its value. Innovation and response, for example, are two aspects of adaptation that Thompson maintains are interconnected. Additionally, the audience responds to two types of media, including material and social disparities. These notable distinctions are evident in *The Color Purple*'s film adaptation, where character relationships are more robust than in the book. Hutcheon subtly suggests that the straightforward act of adapting and recreating variations in the narratives' themes is where true pleasure lies.

Adaptation's Historical Intentionality

In addition, this study identifies four fundamental barriers that underpin the main conversations, mainly the historical organization

of women's writings, including the discourses on women's empowerment, religious studies, male aggression, and favoritism. Women provoke all of the following situations because they oppose autocratic ideologies and their institutional structures. Additionally, these types of discourses clarify how "Spielberg recounts women's rights to be heard" (Cooper, 1999). We may gain a better understanding of how to promote women's rights and accomplish gender equality by looking into various facets of interwoven narratives of women's empowerment, spiritualism, male violence, and discrimination. The text of Walker's narrative about women's empowerment and their intimate interactions with other women may contain the majority of the influential discourse. The strength of women in Walker's book stems from their relationships with other women, which is still a major topic of discussion. By offering herself to satisfy her stepfather's evil desire, Celie rescues her younger sister Nettie from her stepfather and Nettie teaches Celie how to read.

Additionally, through her relationships with other women, Celie learns more about herself and her African culture and eventually musters the courage to take charge of her terrible past. Celie spends the majority of the book interacting with Shug Avery, one of the main characters. Shug's defensive lifestyle is praised by Celie, and it is thanks to Shug that Celie learns to love and respect herself. Consequently, Shug and Nettie's roles are also dropped in the movie adaptation to give Celie a different kind of hope. Males are given preference as hegemonic tools in the film adaptation, while women and their attachments are excluded or ignored; these policies replicate women's conversations to create works that bolster male dominance and "diminish the control that women derive from their interactions with one another" (Cooper, 1999). A crucial component of Walker's stories is the discussion of individualistic spiritualism. The formation of inner strength and spiritual beliefs is associated with the development of the main female characters in her works; for instance, Walker identifies herself as a "born-again pagan" (Walker, 1982). Celie informed Shug that she no longer prays to God because she believes God, like all other men, does not entertain poor black women. Shug compares Celie's concept of God to that of an inaccessible old white man. As a result, she believes God ignores her catastrophic lifestyle. According to Walker, in the white man's Bible, all people of color are "cursed."

Shug encourages Celie to reject the notion that God only exists in white communities and the Bible. Shug rejects the idea of a vengeful God and explains to Celie how "traditional Christian beliefs have oppressed black women" (Walker, 1982). Celie's letters from Nettie emphasize the importance of the Olinka religion, highlighting the diverse perspectives of Africans on God and spirituality. Nettie's unconventional Christian scenario is supported by images in the Bible, which may mislead readers into believing that all individuals are white. Throughout history, the white race has existed somewhere else. Celie believes that "the hair of the Holy Christ is not straight, even though the Bible states that it is similar to lamb's wool." (Walker, 1982)

These discussions provide insight into women's diverse non-secular perspectives and personalities. Walker's novel relies heavily on Celie's religious growth and self-awareness to establish historical structures. Celie rejects a patriarchal white male God and realizes that God hears the prayers she offers, leading her to reaffirm her religious beliefs. As we examine the methods, the movie lessens the women's substitutive religiosity that controls Walker's book. Cooper claims that Spielberg's dominant portrayal of women's religion appears to be comprehensible. Additionally, Spielberg omits the majority of the dialogues involving women that were previously mentioned and

substitutes a subplot that shows Shug Avery attempting to reconcile with her preacher father and his patriarchal set of rules for the typescripts by changing spiritual beliefs.

The topic of male assertiveness and power over women is a crucial component of Walker's stories. In *The Color Purple*, Walker crafts vicious men such as Celie's stepfather [Pa], her husband [Mr.], and his son Harpo, who regularly abuses his wife Sofia. Men's extreme violence against women also serves as a major starting point for Walker's *The Color Purple*, which begins on the first pages with Celie's graphic descriptions of her stepfather's repeated rapes and illegitimate pregnancies, after which "he takes her children away and acts as though he has killed them" (Walker, 1982). In addition, shortly after a few pages, Celie asks their stepfather "to take me instead" in an attempt "to shield her younger sister Nettie from his sexual assaults" (Walker, 1982). It is clear that Celie discusses the physical abuse and sexual assaults she puts up with from her father at the start of the book: "He beat her today because he says I winked at a boy in the church" (Walker, 1982).

The abuse Celie endured for years during her matrimonial bond with Mister, "he beats me like he beats the children. He says, Celie, get the belt" (Walker, 1982), and Harpo corrects Sofia by punishing her. Therefore, the patriarchal system, which makes women submissive and views them as weak, contributes to a higher rate of violent behavior against women. It is commonly held that men are given preference based on their ethnicity. However, the ideology of patriarchy, culture, and society are at the heart of violent behavior against women.

According to Taylor, Spielberg's film either completely omits or drastically reduces the graphic depictions of male aggression against women. Additionally, Spielberg creates a series of scenes that minimize the significance of male brutality.

In the film adaptation, director Spielberg does not address Celie's rape, which contradicts her first letters. The author reduces the novel's opening pessimism and dark elements by having Celie and Nettie play a children's game in a flower field with upbeat music in the background. This also lessens the impact of Celie's abusive rape. In the following scene, audiences see a love-sick Mister attempting to prepare a meal for Shug Avery. Bias and hatred exhibited by Walker in *The Color Purple* are almost completely ignored in the movie's adaptation. Several issues related to ethnic bias are symbolized by the color purple. Walker describes Celie's biological father, who was also murdered by white people. According to Nettie, "Only white people have the right to use restaurants and beds on a train ride to New York, and they also have separate restrooms from people of color" (Walker, 1982).

Walker's writings undoubtedly challenge and overthrow the limitations of prevailing ideologies. To create imaginative changes in both the characters and their images towards the transition from the original to Hollywood, Spielberg notably shows the audience scenes that redefine and falsify the female characters. Spielberg chooses to honor film conferences and assert aesthetic folklore over confronting the sensitive representations of Walker's writings, rather than suppressing their voices. According to McMullen and Solomon, Spielberg's adaptation of *The Color Purple* prioritizes racialism and sexism over women's achievements, while not ignoring male violence.

Despite Spielberg's film adaptation of Walker's novel, Celie and Shug maintain their lesbian relationship and support each other. Shug also continues to be open about her adopted lifestyle. This study focuses on the director's strategic choices in adapting women's writings to film

and how these alternatives challenge prevailing norms and doctrines. Walker argues that few films highlight the strengths of women, regardless of class or race. *The Color Purple* highlights resistance to patriarchy, which Spielberg's film adaptation undermines. Gitlin's analysis of film adaptations of women's narratives suggests that Hollywood's mainstream accepts patriarchal challenges produced by female authors, learning their difficulties to form a compatible subjective structure.

Findings

Walker's novel places significant emphasis on Celie's spiritual development and self-discovery to create historical frameworks. When we analyze the techniques used, the film diminishes the alternative spirituality among women that is prominent in Walker's narrative. Spielberg's adaptation either entirely excludes or significantly minimizes the vivid illustrations of male violence toward women. Moreover, Spielberg crafts several scenes that downplay the importance of male violence. In the film version, director Spielberg omits the portrayal of Celie's assault, which contradicts the content of her initial letters. The prejudice and animosity displayed by Walker in *The Color Purple* are largely overlooked in the film adaptation. Furthermore, the film adaptation of Walker's *The Color Purple* is examined in a postmodern setting using Hutchinson's theory of adaptation. The film often provides a longer story than typical television series or lavish production values.

This research focuses on the 21st-century film adaptation technique, which is more valuable than translation studies. A film adaptation of Walker's book *The Color Purple* was made. Winfrey and Avery were nominated for Best Picture, Most Excellent Heroine Goldberg, and Best Supporting Actress at the 11th Academy Awards. The mysterious and complex state of these three well-known characters Celie, Nettie, and Shug Avery, who are acknowledged as essential parts of the movie adaptation is also extracted in this study. Walker's *The Color Purple* and its film adaptation are the subject of this postmodern analysis, which describes the literary text using an intertextual and contextual evaluation process. This analysis of Walker's novel and movie adaptation of *The Color Purple* also reveals that, even though the situation for Black women has changed, they have remained the same. Black women have historically been disempowered by hegemonic cultural divisions and other factors, which the author has used in her works to promote 'diplomacies of empowerment'.

Conclusion

This study goes beyond previous research to provide specifics about women's conversations in Walker's writings and the typical types of provisions in the movie adaptation. Additionally, by showcasing the hegemonic designs preserved in the film adaptation, Spielberg has demonstrated the intellectual complexities between the original narratives and the adaptation. As a result, the film adaptation offers an evaluation of the original women's discourse in Walker's storytelling technique. Without a doubt, filmmakers must choose what to include and what to omit from the original stories, as well as what to emphasize and what to downplay. Nonetheless, the most important skill in the process of turning novels into films is that the filmmaker must present the stories and images in a way that allows the audience to fully relate to the director's narrative. As a result, the narratives depicted in films become a part of the adaptation's subtext and our inclination to view the world. Additionally, the current study identifies the framework of the Walker adaptation of *The Color Purple* and learns about the evolution of black women's solidarity against racism, which leads to Spielberg's reframing and refinement

of sexism. In the historically white and male-driven film and novel-to-film genre, it could be argued that the current trend of adapting black women's stories to film is indicative of a significant shift towards composition and correspondence with their white counterparts. The universal order is threatened by how Black women's agency, empowerment, and voice are portrayed. Examining an adaptation makes it clear that the demeaning and submissive portrayals of black women that have been employed to maintain the matrix of dominance and mastery in the US and abroad are what most satisfy the general public and the male observer.

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