



Intertextuality as continuum and medium of correction

Maurice Simbili Mwichuli ¹ & John Mugubi ²

¹ Department of Literature, Linguistics and Foreign Languages, Kenyatta University, Kenya; ² Department of Communication, Media, Film and Theatre Studies, Kenyatta University, Kenya

Correspondence: mwichuli.maurice@ku.ac.ke

Abstract

This paper aims at interrogating how intertextuality has been used to enhance continuity in adaptations while correcting injustices committed in the narratives of the parent or source texts. It is the argument of this paper that film adaptations offer new perspectives on the literary and film texts that combine to form them even as they maintain a semblance of similarity in the narratives. The first part of this paper will review literature associated with intertextuality and adaptation. The subsequent parts will discuss the place of intertextuality as regards continuity and correction in the selected adaptation and source texts. The last section will entail the conclusion deduced from the interrogation of the texts and topic at hand. The paper will use the adaptation theory while adapting an intertextual approach. The adaptation under scrutiny will be the animated film *The Seventh Dwarf* released in 2014 and directed by Herald Siepermann and Boris Aljinovic. The literary antecedents to be analyzed are *The Little Snow White* (1812) by Johann and Wilhelm Grimm and *The Seventh Dwarf* (1926) by Franz Hessel.

Keywords: adaptation, continuum, correction, intertextuality, *Seventh Dwarf*

Literature Review: Adaptation and Intertextuality

Adaptation involves the appropriation of a given text in terms of structure and meaning to suit the needs of the moment of the audience. These needs are determined by the changes in the values and tastes of the target societies which vary the context and interpretation frame necessitating a 'flexible' version of a given text. Adaptation as a term defines both the process and the product.

Linda Hutcheon (2006) perceives an adaptation as 'an announced and extensive transposition of a particular work or works' (7). This transposition may involve shifts in terms of genre, media and even the context. She is of the opinion that the adaptation process creates a fairly new text through '(re-)interpretation and (re)creation'. To fit into the new dispensation of technology, meaning and context, the text adapts itself through mutating via adaptation and appropriation. This way, the relevance of the text is sustained through generations although some changes are inevitable. Often, the antecedents or source for adaptation in different media and formats are literary texts. It is however worth noting that no text is 'pure' (Graham Allen, 2000; Hayward Susan, 2006; Jullie Sanders, 2006). Many texts build on information and ideas of other texts that preceded it. Sanders (Ibid.) further opines that literature is used to create other literature as texts feed on each other to create new texts (4). She compares them to master texts that are told over and over in many different forms. This seeming compilation of prior texts brings out the 'new' texts as being intertextual in nature.

Hutcheon (ibid.) relates adaptation to a form of intertextuality. This is because the texts produced emanate from the memories, we have of other texts we interacted with earlier. According to Robert Stam (2010), a film adaptation is in a way participating in 'double intertextuality' as it would need to have both literary and film intertexts (65). Intertextuality then links the texts together by virtue of their origins, characters and themes or concerns. This forms a network of meaning and interpretations well captured by Allen (ibid.):

The idea of the text, and thus of intertextuality, depends, as Barthes argues, on the figure of the web, the weave, the garment (text) woven from the threads of 'already written' and the 'already read'. Every text has its meaning therefore, in relation to other texts. (2000, p. 6)

Texts are always influenced by what was read or written before. The antecedent texts affect how the intertext will be interpreted as the 'combined' and imbued meaning is set to fit the purpose in the new context. Frus and Williams (2010), while observing that many intertexts of the twenty first century freely borrow from, echo, cite, quote and even parody the source texts, aver that this borrowing is an admirable quality, a sign of value and richness (13). The more a text borrows, the richer it becomes as it opens up the area of understanding, application and interpretation even further. Adaptation and intertextuality are usually informed by the author's or director's goal in creating the new intertext as seen in their presentations and analyses.

The Seventh Dwarf (2014) is an animated film directed by Herald Siepermann and Boris Aljinovic. It is an adaptation of *Sleeping Beauty* (1812) by the Grimm brothers that combines the ideas, themes, characters and settings from a number of literary and film texts. This film will be analyzed in the light of how it helps the antecedent intertexts develop their 'original' story before adaptation while at the same time trying to correct any wrong that could have been done either to the characters or in terms of ideologies proposed. The focus of this analysis will be intertextual relationship between the film and two antecedents: *The little Snow White* (1812) by the Grimm brothers and *The Seventh Dwarf* (1926) by Franz Hessel.

Intertextuality as Continuum and Medium of Correction

The Seventh Dwarf (2014) is a sequel to the live action Dwarf trilogy of *Men Alone in the Wood* (2004) and the *Forest is not Enough* (2006). It is an intertext loosely based on *The Sleeping Beauty*, *The Little Snow White* and *Little Red Riding Hood* with

mentions and echoes from other tales among them *Cinderella*, *Puss in Boots*, *Hansel and Gretel* and *the Gingerbread Man*.

Dellamorta, a lady the king jilted, curses Princess Rose to sleep eternally if she is ever pricked on her finger by a sharp object before her eighteenth birthday. To forestall this, the king makes her a shirt of armor. Princess Rose also makes plans with her lover (Jack) to hide himself and come to her rescue with a kiss of love should the misfortune happen. Sadly, Dellamorta who is also a powerful witch knows of all these plans and is determined to make her predictions come to reality as a way of revenge. She uses magic and the help of the mirror and the seven dwarfs to get into Princess Rose's Eighteenth birthday party. She interferes with the clock and the king is fooled to remove the protective shirt of armor his daughter always wears. Through some unfortunate events the princess is pricked and all the people at the party immediately fell asleep except the dwarfs.

Led by Bobo the Seventh Dwarf, they go to Dellamorta's castle to rescue Jack, who then comes to rescue the princess, and ultimately everybody who was present at the party, with a kiss of love. The plan works and Dellamorta is destroyed by her own power reflected on a mirror. Jack and the princess marry and a sculpture is erected in Bobo's honor at the end of the film.

The Little Snow White (1812)

The Little Snow White (1812) is a story of a princess who runs away from her step mother who hates her because of her beauty. She hides in the forest while living with some seven dwarfs who keep her safe. Ultimately, a prince rescues her from her predicament when he marries her and they live happily ever after. *The Seventh Dwarf (2014)* draws a lot in characterization and events from *The Little Snow White (1812)*.

Dellamorta, the evil witch in *The Seventh Dwarf (2014)* is equated to the wicked step mother. She wants to revenge against the king by hurting his daughter, Princess Rose. The desire for attention from the king similar to what she was yearning for in *The Little Snow White (1812)* is what fuels the bitterness. From her song in *The Seventh Dwarf (2014)*, it is apparent that what hurts

Dellamorta most is the fact that the king felt she was not good enough (0.29.45). She feels that the king did not appreciate her commitment and effort: she feels betrayed.

The mirror becomes the queen's constant companion in *The Little Snow White* (1812). It is metaphorical of the evil queen and Snow White's competition for the King's love and attention. The mirror which was once a source of assurance and consolation for her turns into a dangerous obsession. She becomes more evil the more she visits the mirror. This destructive nature of the mirror is also present in *The Seventh Dwarf* (2014).

Dellamorta uses the mirror to travel. She gains entry into Princess Rose's party through a mirror that the dwarfs carry to the party as a birthday gift. She had strategically placed the mirror on the path the dwarfs were using in the forest. The mirror is decorated with ribbons similar to the ones the evil queen was pretending to sell to Snow White (1812 [2015]:174). She puts out her hand through the mirror while the dwarfs are reading the card attached to it, and takes the apple they are carrying. This she bites reminiscent of the way the evil queen did while trying to convince Snow White to have a bite of the poisoned apple that almost kills her (ibid 175). This use of the mirror shows the innovative and cunning personality of Dellamorta as derived from the evil queen's character. It explains why Princess Rose is scared that Dellamorta could be having eyes everywhere (0.02.49). Dellamorta instills fear in Princess Rose through her innovative use of the mirror. She even adjusts the clock forward from the comfort of the mirror. Sadly, though not unexpected, the mirror is also Dellamorta's destruction in a similar manner the evil queen was destroyed. The mirror reflection of the evil queen always stirred her towards the evil direction of her downfall and subsequent death in the *Little Snow White* (1812)

When Bobo tries to alert Snow White of the presence of Dellamorta in the mirror, she satirizes the way the wicked queen used to consult a mirror before trying to destroy her. Snow White satirizes Dellamorta's obsession with being the most beautiful lady on the land. She mimics the very words the evil queen in *Little Snow White* (1812) uses: "Mirror! Mirror! Who is the fairest of them

all?” (0.19.40) and (1812[2015]: 175). This parody portrays Snow White as a proud and satirical character. Ironically, the words have a similar effect on Dellamorta as it does on the evil queen. The evil queen always got angrier and more cunning whenever the mirror confirmed that indeed Snow White was still the prettiest. In *the Seventh Dwarf* (2014), disaster happens shortly after this mirror scene. Snow White has the opportunity to change the flow of events but she under estimates Dellamorta.

Snow White is very appreciative. When Bobo is almost denied entry into the palace, she arrives and saves the situation by telling the gatekeeper that she is with Bobo and his pointed hat could not harm Princess Rose. She tells Bobo: “Don’t worry sweetheart.” (0.16.22). Later, she introduces ‘her friends’ to Rose:

Snow White: Rose. May I introduce you to my friends?

Rose: How Nice. (Giggles). Hallo Children!

(sighs)

Snow White: (Whispering) Bella, these are the seven dwarfs!

Rose: Seven dwarfs!! (0.17.21)

Rose is happy because she believes that her Jack might be fine now that the dwarfs made it to the party. Unfortunately, this is not the case. The dwarfs do not even know who Jack is. When all hell breaks loose, Snow White tries saving the dwarfs by calling to them to follow her. She is however affected by the curse but the dwarfs survive to come and save her again, later. This appreciation has an echo from *Little Snow White* (1812). They saved her in many ways and she is seemingly reciprocating the goodwill in this film. She also has intentions of saving them though she fails.

Dellamorta hates dwarfs. Whenever she appears in Fantabularasa or her island, she is always sniffing out dwarfs. She shouts severally that she hates them and this hatred can be traced to *Little Snow White*. The dwarfs are always thwarting the evil queen’s plans to get rid of Snow White. When Snow White is to die in the forest, it is to the dwarfs’ place she runs to and is saved (1812[2015]:176); they cut the laces with which the evil queen tries

to suffocate her (Ibid,174) and they even carry her when she swallows the poisoned apple (ibid, 175). This is before the prince sees her.

The events in *Little Snow White* (1812) act as a prequel for animated film *the Seventh Dwarf* (2014). The characters and events are linked to the former in a manner akin to a continuation of the story and trying to make apparent what might have transpired that could have been missed in the antecedent intertext. A change in the point of view of *The Little Snow White* (1812) sets ground for intertextuality as a medium of correction.

The Seventh Dwarf (1926)

The Seventh Dwarf (1926) is a literary adaptation of the *Little Snow White* (1812) and written by Hessel Franz. The story is narrated by the unnamed Seventh Dwarf. It is written like a letter and presented as a testimony of what transpired in the relationship between the dwarfs and Snow White from the time she came to live with them till the time she was taken by the prince.

The Seventh Dwarf narrates how he was the most inconvenienced as he had his bed used by Snow White when she came; how she brought bad luck and they endured with her (1926:613) and how they saved her severally from the schemes of her evil stepmother. These included loosening the corset she had tied so tightly to make Snow White die; removing the poisoned comb from her hair and dislodging the poisoned apple stuck in her throat (1926:614). Ironically, it was he that made most of the rescue efforts possible but Snow White, he was sure, had “long since forgotten me, the last one, the seventh” (1926:614). The story has an underlying romantic tone suggesting that the Seventh Dwarf was probably secretly in love with Snow White. He felt betrayed. Chieh-Lan Li (2010) observes that the *Seventh Dwarf* (1926) can be combined with the Grimm’s narration to validate the story of *the Little Snow White* (1812) especially now that it is presented from the point of view of a seemingly minor and ‘unexpected’ character from the antecedent text.

The events in *The Seventh Dwarf* (1926), act as a precursor to the film *The Seventh Dwarf* (2014). To begin with, the two texts

share the title. Throughout the narration, Bobo (the Seventh Dwarf) is very instrumental in the things that transpire in the story. He inspires the other dwarfs to go out and do the things they do. However, Princess Rose does not even know him by name yet she correctly identified the other six dwarfs (0.17.43). It does not matter that he is the only one who sees Jack before he is taken by the dragon or the one who leads the team to go and save him again. He is unrecognized and forgotten just like the protagonist in *The Seventh Dwarf* (1926). The confusion in *The Seventh Dwarf* (2014) when Princess Rose thought that the dwarfs were children (0.17.21) gives Bobo a chance to introduce himself and be known. He now has a name and not just referred to as the Seventh dwarf. He is slowly getting recognized and given an identity.

The recognition by Snow White started at the gate where Bobo was initially denied entry because of the sharp hat he was wearing. She came and helped him get in saying that they were together. He gets in courtesy of Snow White yet, she does not trust him when he says that the evil queen is inside the mirror. If Snow White listened to him, a lot that happen later could have been avoided.

The Seventh Dwarf (2014) has Bobo, the Seventh Dwarf, as one of the major characters and focalizer in the story. He is appreciated in this film and at the end his sculpture is unveiled as a way of immortalizing him and showing appreciation for all he did. Intertextuality in this instance is used to correct the unfair treatment of the Seventh Dwarf by giving him the due recognition and appreciation that could have been given but was not in *Little Snow White* (1812). The lamentations by the protagonist of the *Seventh Dwarf* (1926) seem to bear fruit and get addressed in this adaptation, the *Seventh Dwarf* (2014).

Conclusion

The Seventh Dwarf (2014) is more of a continuation of the story of Little Snow White (1812). It combines the information in Little Snow White (1812) and The Seventh Dwarf (1926) which are basically different perspectives of the same story of Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs. The film gives identity to the Seventh Dwarf

through the name Bobo and also recognizes his contribution by giving him a significant role in the unraveling of the plot. The other dwarfs had already been recognized and appreciated. Princess Rose, after being reminded of who the ‘children’ were, could identify them by name- except for Bobo. This is the situation that is corrected at the end of the film when Bobo is ultimately rewarded for his commitment and sacrifices in both the antecedent texts and the film. He is immortalized through a sculpture made in his favourite posture of a raised leg revealing a shoe with undone laces. The laces always acted as a premonition for something bad about to happen wherever he was. They also provided the coincidence in which he always found a solution to some of the problems that they were facing. The directors of the film have used elements of intertextuality to correct the possible ‘injustice’ against the Seventh Dwarf.

Work Cited

- Allen, Graham. *Intertextuality: The New Critical Idiom*. London: Routledge. 2000.
- Frus, Phyllis and Williams, Christy. (Eds) *Beyond Adaptation: Essays on Radical Transformations of Original Works*. London: Mc Farland. 2010.
- Grimm Jacob and Wilhelm. (1812). "Little Snow White" *The Original Folk and Fairy Tales of the Brothers Grimm*. Jack Zipes (Trans.) Princeton/ Oxford: Princeton Univ. Press. 2015. Pg. 170-177.
- Hayward, Susan. *Cinema Studies: The Key Concepts*. 3rd Edition. London: Routledge, 2006
- Hessel, Franz. (1926) "The Seventh Dwarf". *Spells of Enchantment: The Wondrous Fairy Tales of Western Culture*. Trans. Jack Zipes. New York: Vikings. 1991.
- Hutcheon, Linda. *A Theory of Adaptation*. New York: Routledge. 2006.
- The Seventh Dwarf*. Directed by Herald Siepermann and Boris Aljinovic, Zipfelmützen GmbH and Co.KG, 2014.
- Sanders, Julie. *Adaptation and Appropriation*. London/New York: Routledge. 2006.
- Stam, R. *Beyond Fidelity: The Dialogics of Adaptation*. In "Adaptation", J. Naremore (Ed.). New Jersey: Rutgers University Press. 2000.

