

Transcultural Adaptation
5-7 November, 2018 - An International Symposium -
Call for Papers



Adaptation scholars frequently draw upon the concept's (pseudo-)Darwinian dimension to argue that adaptation is a strategy which facilitates the survival of narratives across borders, be it those of time, space, or media. By the same token, *transcultural* approaches to adaptation focus on 'displaced' narratives in a globalised environment. They assume that dynamic cultures pervade each other in manifold ways, and they allow for ideological and cultural opposites to enter into a fruitful relationship which is never unidirectional. Evidently, transcultural adaptation studies resonate with current social and psychological discussions of migration processes, where the assumption that it is only the immigrants themselves who transform their identities in order to 'fit in' has gradually given way to the idea that the destination societies are also changed in the course of the encounter.

In highly politicised debates, transcultural adaptation is often viewed sceptically as a forceful, violent gesture in the spirit of 'appropriation' (Julie Sanders), suggesting a forceful seizure of power. It is hardly ever free of controversy, as the process of adaptation resonates with post-colonial forms of 'writing back' on the one hand but entails new forms of colonialism on the other. Transcultural works like Mira Nair's Bollywood-inspired revision of William Thackeray's *Vanity Fair* (2004) have been criticised both for 'whitewashing', as well as for indulging in neo-exoticism.

The planned symposium will bring together scholars from a variety of backgrounds, with the aim to facilitate transcultural scholarly encounters and to address questions like the following:

- Do transcultural adaptive encounters always entail a violent takeover, and does this throw us back to derogatory notions of adaptation like 'infiltration' and 'cannibalisation'?
- Is there room for other conceptualisations like the fraternity model (Shahani/Charry), or Iain Robert Smith's use of the *meme* with its emphasis on mutation?
- Can we overcome traditional models of transcultural adaptation with their one-sided emphasis on resistance, without glossing over the break-lines inherent in the process?
- What other cultural borders do transcultural adaptations cross, besides the traditional demarcation lines of territory and nationhood?
- Which alternative views of one's own culture do transcultural adaptations afford, and how are (self-)images renegotiated in the process of adaptation?

We invite case-studies and theoretical interventions in the form of 20-minute papers. Contributors are welcome to discuss adaptations from any (trans-)cultural context and from any medium.

Proposals should be sent to wieland.schwanebeck@tu-dresden.de by 18 August 2017.

Please include your name and institutional affiliation, an abstract of no more than 250 words, and a short bio of no more than 150 words.

Organiser: Dr. Wieland Schwanebeck (English Literary Studies, TU Dresden, Germany)

Our aim is to secure funding to cover travel and accommodation costs for all participants.