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### WHAT IS APPROPRIATION?

There are many ways in which both the practice and the effects of adaptation and appropriation intersect and are interrelated, yet it is equally important to maintain some clear distinctions between them as creative activities. An adaptation most often signals a relationship with an informing source text either through its title or through more embedded references; an Anglophone cinematic version of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, although clearly reinterpreted by the collaborative efforts of director, scriptwriter, actors and the generic demands of the movement from staged drama to film, remains ostensibly *Hamlet*. Building on the subcategory of adaptation categorized by Deborah Cartmell as analogue, which we began to consider in Chapter 1 (Cartmell and Whelehan 1999: 24), appropriation frequently effects a more decisive journey away from the informing text into a wholly new cultural product and domain, often through the actions of interpolation and critique as much as through the movement from one genre to others. Indeed, appropriation may or may not involve a generic shift and it may certainly still require the kinds of 'readings alongside' or comparative approaches that juxtapose (at least) one text against another, which we have begun to delineate as central to the reception of

adaptations. But certainly appropriations tend to have a more complicated, intricate and sometimes embedded relationship to their intertexts than a straightforward film version of a canonical or well-known text would suggest. The relationship can therefore seem more sideways or deflected, further along the spectrum of distance than a straightforward generic transposition. This chapter aims to unpack some of the diverse modes and operations of appropriation. In order to ease the discussion, the examples have been divided into two broad categories: embedded texts and sustained appropriations.

### EMBEDDED TEXTS AND INTERPLAY

The stage and film musical has already been cited as an inherently adaptational form, often reworking canonical plays, novels and even poems into a mode that uses song and dance to deliver its narrative. *West Side Story* and *Kiss Me Kate*, two previously mentioned Shakespeare-informed musicals, are intriguing examples of this practice since they go one stage further by also operating as proximations: modern reworkings of the Shakespearean play-source. *West Side Story* would certainly not exist without *Romeo and Juliet*: Tony and Maria are clearly modern reimaginations of Shakespeare's 'star-crossed' lovers in a 1950s New York context. Their story of a love denied by feuding urban communities, and in particular the musical's two presiding gangs, the Jets and the Sharks, finds its origins in the Montague–Capulet rivalry, the 'ancient grudge' that drives the prejudice and violence of Shakespeare's stage Verona. The film's carefully realized *mise-en-scène* highlighted what was a topical issue of race conflict in New York at the time when the musical was first written and performed, and which manifested itself in violence against the immigrant Puerto Rican community.

There is much pleasure to be had in tracing the interrelationships and overlaps between the two texts, musical and early modern drama. The iconic fire escapes of the West Side provide a striking counterpart to the balcony scene of Shakespeare's play. Romeo's quasi-patriarch and confidante, the Friar, first seen in the play collecting herbs, is transformed into the gentle 'Doc', owner of

the local drugstore where many of the Jets meet but also someone keen to act as a bridge between the rival communities. In a production working in a 'teenage' idiom – the late 1950s being the moment when teenage culture was formalized in both cultural and commercial terms at least in a US–UK context – 'Doc' is the sole parental figure we see on stage or on the screen (the musical was made into a film in 1961). Maria's parents are heard, but only as voices off; authority is effectively sidelined, removed from the centre. There are other supposed figures of authority who have a physical presence, in particular Officer Krupke and his colleagues from the NYPD, and the dance hall comper, but they are either laughably corrupt or inept in their handling of the tense situation. In Shakespeare's play Juliet has a counterpart confidante to Romeo's in the comic figure of the Nurse. In *West Side Story* the comic aspects of that relationship are downplayed in favour of the sisterly attentions of Anita, fiancée to Maria's gang-leader brother Bernardo. One unforgettable sequence depicts a choreographed sexual assault performed on Anita by Jets members when she tries, and fails, to deliver a message from Maria to Tony, with tragic results. This moment is another suggestive reworking of *Romeo and Juliet*, collapsing into one scene both Mercutio's bawdy misogynistic banter with the Nurse and the plotline of the mis-delivered letter, something Jacques Derrida and others have identified as the crucial turning point of the play.

This is still adaptation then but it is adaptation in another mode or key. *West Side Story* does stand alone as a successful musical without particular need of *Romeo and Juliet*, but I would maintain that audiences of the musical who possessed an intertextual awareness of Shakespeare in play had their experience deepened and enriched by a wider range of possible responses. Lyrics such as 'There's a place for us' undoubtedly return us to issues of spatial confinement in the tragedy, and the Jets' much reiterated gang tag 'Womb to Tomb' is a witty allusion to the tragic confinement of the play's young protagonists by the final scene of the play. This is a good example of the more sustained imaginative (and sometimes politically left-leaning) reworking of the source text which I am identifying here as intrinsic to appropriation: rather than the movements of proximation or cross-generic interpretation that we

identified as central to adaptation, here we have a more wholesale redrafting, or indeed recrafting, of the intertext.

*Kiss Me Kate* has Shakespeare's misogynist comedy *The Taming of the Shrew* literally at its core: in a classic meta-theatrical move, the musical (filmed in 1953) is about a group of performers staging a musical version of *The Taming of the Shrew*. Audiences register two levels of adaptation and appropriation taking place here. The embedded musical of 'The Shrew' is on the surface a more straightforward adaptation, reworking the characters and events of Shakespeare's play into a song and dance format with Katherina's societal resistance translated into songs such as 'I Hate Men' (though it must be said that rethinking Bianca's flirtatious playing off her suitors into the song 'Tom, Dick and Harry' represents a considerable leap of imagination). The format of a musical 'play within a play' is itself Shakespearean in resonance, recalling the meta-theatrical framework of *The Taming of the Shrew* itself but also *Hamlet*, *Love's Labour's Lost* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, among others. *Shrew* opens with the 'Induction', which establishes that the whole play of Katherina and Petruchio's embattled relationship is a performance by a troupe of travelling actors who have tricked the inebriated Christopher Sly into thinking he is a lord watching household theatricals on his aristocratic estate. *Kiss Me Kate* frames its *Shrew* musical with a plotline of embattled theatre stars, once married but now divorced. There are obvious, hilarious ways in which their offstage temperaments mirror their onstage performances; Lilli Vanessi, for example, is outspoken and hot-headed in a manner appropriate to her character Katherine. While the musical's untroubled manifestations of early twentieth-century US sexual politics, including the beatings and confinements visited upon the forceful Lilli, may no longer be acceptable as comic fodder in an era alert to domestic violence, the point remains that *Kiss Me Kate* is both an adaptation and an appropriation at the same time. If the pure adaptation rests in the embedded musical, then the appropriative aspect is found in the wider framework story of the US theatre performers and in the related subplot of the Mafia henchmen seeking debt repayments from the production's Hortensio, Bill Calhoun. The gangsters deliver one of the show's most famous songs, whose

title has itself almost reached the status of comic by-line for the act of Shakespearean adaptation: 'Brush Up Your Shakespeare'. When Angela Carter chose this as one of the three epigraphs to her late novel on theatre, Shakespeare and the musical, *Wise Children* (1992), she was surely anticipating a readership with a vivid cultural memory of *Kiss Me Kate*.

*Kiss Me Kate* can obviously be viewed and understood in the context of Shakespearean appropriation more generally, which, as we will see in Chapter 3, is a veritable cultural field in its own right, but it also relates to a tradition that can best be described as 'backstage dramas'. These are texts interested in going behind the scenes of performances of particular plays or shows. This can be achieved in self-reflexive ways on the stage, as in *Kiss Me Kate* or Michael Frayn's play about English repertory theatre, *Noises Off* (1982). *Shakespeare in Love* (dir. John Madden, 1998) also exploits this motif, exploring an offstage relationship between Will Shakespeare and his star performer Thomas Kent (a disguised Viola de Lesseps) via suggestive cinematic cross-cutting between their 'real' life and their onstage performance in an embryonic *Romeo and Juliet*.

Backstage drama of this kind has also been developed in a prose fiction context. Australian author Thomas Keneally's 1987 novel *The Playmaker* recounts the rehearsals and performance of a production of George Farquhar's 1706 play *The Recruiting Officer*. The play is performed by a group of convict actors who have been assembled for the purpose by Lieutenant Ralph Clark, a British military officer who is overseeing the penal colony established in Sydney, Australia, in the late eighteenth century. In a funny and touching account of the rehearsal period, Keneally draws on resonant echoes between the events of Farquhar's play, which depicts the sexual shenanigans of a group of recruiting officers in the provincial shire town of Shrewsbury, and daily life in the penal colony, where site-specific hierarchies prevail and where many of the women convicts are the sexual property of the military officers and overseers.

Lieutenant Clark falls in love with his lead actor, Mary Brenham, a convicted clothes thief who performs the part of the cross-dressing Silvia in *The Recruiting Officer*, but we are always aware

of the geographical and temporal parameters of this love story. Keneally structures his narrative in the form of five chapters and an epilogue, self-consciously recalling dramatic structure, and in the epilogue we learn of Ralph's return to his English fiancée. Mary Brenham, along with the majority of convicts whose lives we have followed, slips from the historical record. Keneally's purpose in writing this novel stretches in resonance far beyond the 1789 setting of the events it purports to recall; shadowing the world of the penal community represented in the novel stand the lives of the displaced aboriginal and First Nation communities of Australia. For all the play-within-the-novel's claims to be the 'first' theatre production in this 'new' land, the reader is made all too aware that the Sydney penal colony is far from being the 'original' existence in this space and place. Behind the deployment of the surface appropriation of Farquhar's play to explore the world of the penal colony (Keneally worked extensively with historical archives), the author is concerned to make visible another more hostile act of cultural appropriation, the seizure of the land rights and cultural claims of the indigenous societies. The novel is tellingly dedicated to 'Arabadoo and his brethren, still dispossessed', and Keneally has continued to be a prominent campaigner against Australia's restrictive immigration laws for related reasons. Appropriation, then, as with adaptation, shades in important ways into the discursive domains of other disciplines, here the legal discourse of land property and human rights.

Intriguingly, Keneally's novel underwent a further process of adaptation when playwright Timberlake Wertenbaker re-created *The Playmaker* as a stage drama, *Our Country's Good*, in 1988. Following the practice of adaptation outlined in the previous chapters, Wertenbaker altered, condensed and redirected the focus of Keneally's novel for the purposes of her play. She chose to commence the play with a scene on board the convict ship that transports the prisoners to Australia, whereas in the novel this experience is only ever recalled in flashback and by means of collective memory. Adding in the specific character, and in some sense narrative mouthpiece, of the Governor-in-Chief of New South Wales, Arthur Philip, Wertenbaker embeds in her play several extended justifications for the rehabilitative and socially

constructive power of theatre and the arts. She had her own political motives for this in the late 1980s. The debates conducted in the play about the sociocultural importance of the arts had a highly topical resonance in an era of UK Arts Council funding cuts. In an interesting twist, *Our Country's Good* has in turn proved an extremely popular play for staging and performance by prison drama groups, continuing the active case for drama as socially therapeutic. Reading the accounts of prison actors of the inspirational effect of the experience of staging *Our Country's Good*, there exists a sense in which the events described in Keneally's novel have come full circle (Wertenbaker 1991 [1988]: vi–xvi).

Wertenbaker's play was first staged by the Royal Court Theatre in London, playing in repertory alongside *The Recruiting Officer*, which invited audiences to experience the texts in a comparative way. To further emphasize their connections, both productions shared the same company of actors so that for audiences attending both performances there was an interesting read-across from one to the other. On one night spectators might see a particular actor playing Justice Balance in *The Recruiting Officer* and then the next day that same actor playing Keith Freeman in *Our Country's Good*, the public hangman who assumes the role of Balance in the Australian convict production. Another double-handed play frequently staged by theatre companies for similar reasons and with similar read-across effects is Alan Ayckbourn's *A Chorus of Disapproval* (1984). This play is also about a company rehearsing a production, this time a provincial amateur British theatre group staging a production of John Gay's eighteenth-century operatic musical *The Beggar's Opera*. Gay's text has been subject to numerous adaptations and acts of cultural filtration, famously providing the template for Bertolt Brecht and Kurt Weil's *Threepenny Opera*. Ayckbourn ensures that his audiences are alert to the particular connection between his play and Gay's by commencing *A Chorus of Disapproval* at the end, as it were, as the curtain falls on the successful performance and the actors take their bows. As a consequence of this, when the play lurches back in time to the start of the audition and rehearsal process the audience already knows that it is tracing Guy Jones's ascent from theatre hopeful to leading man. Of course, the humour also

resides in the fact that Guy becomes far too easily identified with his part as Gay's womanizing criminal protagonist Macheath, upsetting various female members of the company in the process. Much of the comedy of *A Chorus* derives from the audience's active engagement with the embedded text and resonance of *The Beggar's Opera*, playing as it does on similarity and difference in ways that we have already seen are central to the adaptive process. Ayckbourn highlights the continuity of actor and part but also the discontinuities between Guy's privileged provincial existence and the eighteenth-century underworld of Gay's comic opera. When *Beggar's Opera* plays in repertory with Ayckbourn's play these connections and contrasts are drawn out for audiences in a highly explicit fashion.

The methodology of immersive theatre company Punchdrunk, whose work has found particular purchase with audiences in the UK and the US during the past decade, again appears to rely on the prior knowledges that audiences bring to the experience of their experimental stagings of canonical plays and operas. In their 2010 collaboration with ENO (English National Opera), they staged John Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi* (1612–13) in such a way that audiences could choose the sequence in which to experience the scenes staged in different rooms; in this way the idea of personalized experience was heightened but the randomness of the experience suggested that those with a prior understanding of the play and its linear or incremental sequence of events would experience the enforced fragmentation in very particular ways, reconnecting in their own heads the relationships between discrete events. In another remarkable collaboration in 2013, the company staged *The Borough*, which was an audio-directed personal navigation of the Suffolk town of Aldeburgh in which the listener-walker confronted elements of George Crabbe's Aldeburgh-based collection of poems, first published in 1810, and *Peter Grimes*, the Benjamin Britten opera created out of Crabbe's poem (specifically from Letter XXII) in the early twentieth century. Since on the midsummer weekend when I experienced *The Borough* there had also been a site-specific beach performance of the opera, the same beach on whose crunchy pebbles the audio experience hauntingly began, provided a clear indication of the overlap and cross-referentiality of the immersive



experience. That the experience itself invited the hearer-walker to consider the feeling of rejection that Grimes undergoes, and how a community can act as threat as well as a space of welcome, placed the participant at the centre of the adaptive process, at one point quite literally hiding in a wardrobe in the bedroom of a terraced house near the seafront. Immersion, but also the role of the personalized response to adaptations, is brought strikingly into view by this particular participatory experience.

Encouraged interplay between appropriations and their sources begins to figure here as a fundamental aspect of the reading or spectating experience, one productive of new meanings and applications. But, as already stressed, appropriations do not always make their founding relationships and interrelationships explicit. The gesture towards the source text can be wholly more shadowy than in the above examples, and this brings into play, sometimes in controversial ways, questions of intellectual property, proper acknowledgement and, at its worst, the charge of plagiarism.

### **SUSTAINED APPROPRIATION: HOMAGE, PLAGIARISM AND TRAVELLING TALES**

When Graham Swift won the Booker Prize in 1996 for his novel *Last Orders*, a controversy over the award soon emerged. As Pamela Cooper has recorded, connections were identified between Swift's novel and William Faulkner's 1939 American classic *As I Lay Dying*:

In a letter to the book review supplement of the newspaper *The Australian* John Flow of the University of Queensland underlined some very close similarities in structure and subject-matter, including a monologue given to the dead person, a monologue consisting of numbered points, and a monologue made up of a single sentence.

(Cooper 2002: 17)

Flow's accusation was that the provable line of influence from Faulkner rendered Swift's book secondary, a substandard derivation of *As I Lay Dying* and therefore unworthy of a prize, in conferring which the judges had praised its originality. Charges and

counter-charges flew in the British press, with several of the Booker judges, including Jonathan Coe, admitting that they had never read the Faulkner novel (Cooper 2002: 60) and with Julian Barnes defending Swift on the grounds that the novelist himself called *Last Orders* an ‘homage’ to Faulkner. In the final analysis the argument appeared to pivot on whether Swift had sought to suppress or obscure the relationship between the two novels. Had he declared *Last Orders* as an adaptation, though, would the Booker judges have made the same decision? Was the assumption of originality the driving factor? We can never know for sure, but the situation highlights the assumption by some at least (Flow for sure) that adaptations are second rate, not worthy of major literary prizes. It is for this reason that adaptation studies theorists often feel the need to go on the defensive, and assert the right of an adaptation to be considered a new work, a work of creativity in its own right: ‘an adaptation is derivation that is not derivative – a work that is second without being secondary’ (Hutcheon 2006: 9). A close reading of Swift’s richly textured and hyper-British narrative convinces me that the adaptive relationship only heightens its literary achievements and enhances its capacity to produce profound responses in the self-aware reader.

It should be stressed that earlier work by Swift had been compared to Faulkner’s, not least *Waterland* (1983), in both style and the way that it approached land as character. As Flow’s critique of *Last Orders* identified, there are several notable structural overlaps between Faulkner’s tale of a Mississippi family group transporting the corpse of their dead wife/mother to the town of Jefferson for burial and Swift’s story of four male companions transporting the ashes of their late friend, the butcher Jack Dodds, to scatter them off the end of Margate Pier. Faulkner’s novel is shaped by means of a series of juxtaposed monologues, both from family members, including the highly poetic but increasingly mentally troubled and estranged Darl, who in some sense provides the novel’s central narrative consciousness, and onlookers to the grotesque comedy of the strongly smelling coffin being carried through floods and townships to its final resting place. Swift’s novel shares the same sense of grim comedy and the same structural monologues. At one point we have a single-sentence monologue from a character

in the Faulkner novel – the child Vardaman – and Swift has Vince’s exclamation ‘Old buggers’ voiced at the Chatham naval memorial, one of several poignant staging points on the grieving friends’ Margate pilgrimage in *Last Orders* (Swift 1996: 130). Faulkner’s corpse Addie Bundren speaks a single monologue, delivered, as it were, from beyond the grave, and Swift’s Jack does the same (1996: 285). In both novels, readers are party to monologues delivered by women left behind: Cora Tull in *As I Lay Dying* and Amy, Jack’s widow, in *Last Orders*. In one remarkable sequence in the Faulkner narrative, Cash, the eldest Bundren son, recounts the obsessive care with which he fashioned the coffin in which his mother’s rotting corpse is now being transported; the nailing together of the coffin was the action that began the novel. In Swift’s novel this narrative touch has been transformed into Ray Johnson’s ‘rules’ for betting on horses. In both novels, though, these seemingly practical and prosaic lists, both strongly tied to their place of origin, have metaphorical application.

In a manner akin to Faulkner’s Darl and Cash, whose distinct voices and world-views provide the centre to the juxtaposed monologues of *As I Lay Dying*, Ray’s monologues place him as the central consciousness of *Last Orders*. Between the lines of what Ray tells us we learn of his love for Jack’s wife Amy and his estrangement from his own wife and daughter, as well as the past history of this complicated set of friends and associates (many of their relationships dating back to wartime experiences). Swift’s historical and geographical context and even the idioms within which he writes are acutely his own; what the reader’s awareness of Faulkner’s novel does, however, is to deepen the understanding of the themes of mortality and friendship and of the significance of the environments which we ourselves inhabit to the story Swift is telling. What is both interesting and troubling in the case of *Last Orders* and its homage to Faulkner (declared or not), however, is that what in the case of Shakespeare studies might be termed an examination of creative borrowings, citing allusions in his *oeuvre* to Ovid, Plutarch, Thomas Lodge, the Roman comedies and so on, becomes in the case of a modern novel a reductive discussion of plagiarism and ‘inauthenticity’. Robert Weimann states that ‘In precapitalist societies the distance between the poet’s act of

appropriating a given text or theme and his or her own intellectual product and property is much smaller: the extent to which his *matière* is given, the extent to which “source”, genre, plot, patterns, topoi, and so on are pre-ordained is much greater’ (1988: 434). Modern legal notions of copyright have complicated the freedom with which writers seek to engage explicitly with the work of others, but it is worth adding that in his volume on *Literature* in this series Peter Widdowson asserted that ‘revisionary’ writing is a fundamental sub-set of what we might categorize as the literary (Widdowson 1999).

The consonances between the two works under the spotlight, Faulkner’s and Swift’s, are inescapable, but what is of particular interest in this context is the specific charge of indebtedness. Flow seemed to devalue Swift’s novel because it was ‘unoriginal’, but how sustainable is that position in an era of postmodernist borrowing and *bricolage*? What also concerned critics and readers responding to Flow’s initial observations was the lack of explicit acknowledgement of these borrowings by Swift. Could *Last Orders* have regained cultural status if there had been a prefatory note declaring the homage publicly? James Joyce’s *Ulysses* may have signalled its Homeric debts in its title but its Shakespearean allusions are almost as plentiful, yet they tend to be mentioned in non-accusative ways. Does that render Joyce’s novel somehow inauthentic? Surely not. The *Last Orders* controversy raises important questions as to whether a novelist needs to ‘adequately’ acknowledge intertextuality and allusiveness. If we adhere to Genette’s theories of palimpsestuous writing as discussed in Chapter 1, then surely part of the pleasure of response for readers in these instances consists in tracing these relationships for themselves and according to their own reading experience. Without wishing to reduce the act of reading to a game of ‘spot the appropriation’ it is important to recognize that explicit soundings of intertextual relationships may close down, as much as open up, the possibility for interpretation.

Swift’s novel is in many respects all about the search for family and a sense of home, and, like so many novels of travel, its ultimate focus is really on the starting point or origin as much as the stated destination. The generous or intertextually alert reader might

then have seen early on in Swift's approach an acknowledgement of the importance of predecessors. In the novel Swift alludes to several literary archetypes. The device of the journey is an ancient one in Western and other literatures, as is the topic of death. Swift himself has registered: 'The story about the pressure of the dead on the living, in the wake of death, is as old as Homer' (cited in Cooper 2002: 17). The novelist has always been a deeply allusive writer. *Waterland* opens with a highly suggestive epigraph from Dickens's *Great Expectations*: 'Ours was the marsh country ...'; *Ever After* (1992) carries resonances of *Hamlet*, as discussed in Chapter 3, and, as discussed in Chapter 4, *The Light of Day* (2003) rewrites the genre of detective fiction (filtered through a specific Graham Greene intertext, *The End of the Affair*) alongside the classical myth of Orpheus. Pamela Cooper has identified further links between *Last Orders* and the poetry of T. S. Eliot, in particular his 1922 poem 'The Waste Land', with its London public house refrain of 'Hurry up please it's time', which seems to replay itself in the opening location of the novel and its punning title; and the third part of which was written – by Eliot's own assertion in personal correspondence – in the Nayland Rock shelter on the Margate promenade (now a listed building due to its literary associations; see Thorpe 2009). Eliot's bleak rumination on post-war society gives an added resonance to the ruminations of Swift's wartime friends. As they stand on the pier at the close of the novel, overlooking the same Margate Sands alluded to by 'The Waste Land', a tone of nihilism is introduced into a novel that in other ways is threaded through with the hopefulness of connection:

On Margate Sands  
 I can connect  
 Nothing with nothing.  
 (Eliot 1969)

Eliot's poem has several rich intertexts of its own, but one which strikes a reader early on is that of Geoffrey Chaucer's seminal medieval work *The Canterbury Tales*, whose positive hopeful opening in springtime – 'Whan that Aprill with his

shoures soote / The droghte of March hath perced to the roote' (Chaucer 1986: 'General Prologue', ll. 1–16) – Eliot inverts to 'April is the cruellest month'. This might alert us in turn to a parallel set of allusions to Chaucer's story of pilgrimage in Swift's novel as the grieving friends make their way to the south of England to scatter their friend's ashes. The narrative appears almost to enjoy this intertextual game: 'Look out for signs to Canterbury' (Swift 1996: 181). There is even a significant detour to Canterbury Cathedral.

By appropriating Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* fused with Eliot's modernist rewriting, Swift adopts and adapts the ancient literary strategy of paralleling an actual journey with an inner or spiritual one. All of this is glancingly alluded to in the opening pages of *Last Orders*: Ray is sitting in a Bermondsey public house – the jokingly named 'Coach and Horses' since, as the characters keep reflecting 'it ain't never gone nowhere' (6). This, of course, parallels Chaucer's Southwark inn, the Tabard, where his twenty-nine pilgrims first encounter one another and decide to travel together, passing the time by telling stories at the suggestion of Harry Bailey, the tavern host. At the start of *Last Orders*, Ray is awaiting his companions for the Margate Pier trip. As in Faulkner's *As I Lay Dying*, there is a grimly comic element to this gathering and the journey, a fact emphasized by the container for Jack's ashes, which, instead of being a holy grail, more prosaically resembles an instant coffee jar. Yet, at its heart, the 'pilgrimage' to Margate proves to be a deeply epiphanic experience for the four men involved. If *Last Orders* is structured through monologues in a manner akin to *As I Lay Dying*, this 'polyphonic' structure also echoes at a deeper level Chaucer's poem with its embedded stories (Phillips 2000: 2). In a manner that is aesthetic as much as linguistic, Swift transports Faulkner's style into a very mixed English idiom.

Chaucer's pilgrims travelled on horseback; Faulkner's grotesque funeral procession moved forward by a stumbling combination of horse and wagon; Swift's protagonists travel in a royal blue Mercedes or 'Merc', provided by Vince, who is a used-car salesman. The car thus becomes in *Last Orders* emblematic of the new mobility, social and actual, of South Londoners; a mobility that pulls figures like Vince away from the family business in butchery and which

renders trips to Kent simple and (almost) insignificant in a way unimaginable to Chaucer's pilgrims and perhaps even to the much remembered seasonal hop-pickers of these particular Londoners' past. The four men begin their journey in April when there are 'daffs out on the verges' (Swift 1996: 30), and with a sense of promise akin to Chaucer's pilgrims. But *Last Orders* is, as its title indicates, also deeply elegiac in tone. The novel is a journey through post-imperial England; the narrative refrain reflects on how things have changed for the British male in particular, for this journey is undoubtedly a masculine quest. The wife figure in this novel, Amy, is, however, no travelling Wife of Bath; she chooses to stay behind, resisting the grim irony of going to Margate with Jack's ashes when it was the journey she had planned to make with him in life in their retirement. Amy's travel in the novel is far more restricted: the circular No. 44 bus journey she makes to see her and Jack's mentally impaired daughter June in the hospital. The England depicted in *Last Orders* is both oddly resilient and on its last legs, mutable and yet with a rich sense of historical legacy.

Similarly to *As I Lay Dying*, but also like the organized pilgrimages of the Middle Ages, the route, actual and psychological, of *Last Orders* is mapped out by means of various specifically named places, way-stations and sites which carry meanings for both the past and the present: 'The four men, compelled by a common errand, travel together across a small part of England, making discoveries about themselves, each other, their world, time, and history' (Cooper 2002: 23). Part of considering the role of historical process for Swift involves a strong engagement with a specific English past. A further crucial intertext in that work is a cinematic one: Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger's wartime rumination (from an immigrant perspective) on English identity, *A Canterbury Tale* (1944), in which four people make a journey to Canterbury that is itself strongly suggestive of pilgrimage. My point in tracing these complex allusive networks in Swift's novel is to suggest that the Faulkner appropriation is just one of a series of homages and responses and that the act of appropriation involves an anglicizing of the themes and approach in quite self-conscious ways to explore the topic of national identity and

inheritance. Flow was clearly right in identifying the Faulknerian legacy in *Last Orders* but a debate about originality misses the point when encountering such a deeply intertextual novel.

Critics have identified yet further allusions in *Last Orders* to the Old English poems *Wanderer* and *Seafarer* (Cooper 2002: 32), not least in the narrative's engagement with different landscapes, environments and habitats: land, sea, *terra firma*. Most obviously, Margate pier in the novel offers us a version of 'land's end' and we have desert and sea settings at play in the wartime remembrances of our four travellers. Dee Dyas (2001: 23) has indicated how *Wanderer* and *Seafarer* deploy biblical parallels and Cooper has rightly traced elements of the Edenic storyline in Swift's novel, not least in the Cain and Abel struggle between Lenny and Vince. The novel's extended funeral procession both is and is not a secular version of the medieval pilgrimage, just as Chaucer's pilgrims are a mix of the mercantilist, the romantic, the self-serving and the pious. The movement is both familiar and new each time it is made.

## VARIATIONS ON A THEME

If a working knowledge of Swift's Faulknerian intertext is crucial, revealing, and often moving, in highlighting for us distinctly South London analogues to the Mississippi of the 1930s that informed *As I Lay Dying*, we must also acknowledge that we are dealing in *Last Orders* with, in Pamela Cooper's words, a 'symphony of intertexts' and that it is how these play off against each other that provides the truly meaningful reading experience (2002: 37). The musical metaphors of symphony and polyphony that seem to attach themselves to Swift's novel are instructive since it is one of the major contentions of this volume that when searching for ways to articulate the processes of adaptation and appropriation we need a more active vocabulary, and one derived from the performing arts as much as from the biological sciences is illuminating. A kinetic vocabulary is one that is dynamic, enabling adaptation studies to constantly move forward as much as it is backward looking, and one that embraces ideas of composition and creativity. Music allows us access to less linear understandings than the motif of the journey so obviously deployed by Swift in *Last Orders*, and



was interestingly one of the forms to which T. S. Eliot was most drawn when trying to create a new poetry rooted in fragmentation. It is, then, in musicology that some of the more enabling metaphors for the adaptation process might be located.

Much European baroque music in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries derived its performative impetus from improvising upon dance music and patternings, working with such forms as the *bergamasca*, the *folia* and the *passamezzo*. Improvisation, or variation upon a firm foundation, is therefore fundamental to the composition and structure of baroque tunes. Musical creations by Diego Ortiz, Marco Uccellini and Henry Purcell, in Spain, Italy and England, respectively, were commonly structured in terms of ‘grounds’, repeated harmonic base instrumental patterns, often played by lute, harpsichord or cello, or a combination of both, on the surface of which the more improvisational lines of instrumentation are performed by flute, recorder, bass, viol or violin. We have in this a rather alluring model for the way in which an intertext in a novel such as *Last Orders* might function as the base or ‘ground’, informing the top note that constitutes the creative turn. The way in which Faulkner’s chapter structure for *As I Lay Dying* became the formulaic scaffold for Swift’s rumination on Englishness is newly appreciated from this vantage point and Eliot’s notion of ‘Tradition and the Individual Talent’ finds new aesthetic purchase in this context.

Perhaps one of the most well-recognized musical contexts in which this ongoing yet circular process of innovation upon a base ground takes place is Johann Sebastian Bach’s *Aria mit verschiedenen Veränderungen* (‘Aria with Different Variations’), better known as *The Goldberg Variations*. There are thirty variations framed by an opening and closing performance of the base aria. As novelist Richard Powers so eloquently describes in *The Gold Bug Variations* (discussed further in Chapter 9):

The set is built around a scheme of infinitely supple, proliferating relations. Each of the thirty is a complete ontogeny, unfolding until it denies that it differs at its conception from all siblings by only the smallest mutation ... an imperceptibly vast *chaconne*, an evolutionary *passacaglia* built on the repetition and recycling of this Base.

(Powers 1991: 578)

Powers's own metaphorical point of reference here is the genetic patterning revealed by research into DNA in the 1940s and 1950s, and the identification of the intertwined double helix by Francis Crick and James Watson; but what his prose gives us is an invaluable set of terms for reconceptualizing the process of adaptation, moving away from a purely static or linear approach. Unfoldings, mutations, repetitions, evolutions, variations: the possibilities are endless and exciting.

A modern musical counterpart to baroque music's deployment of grounds can be found in the improvisational qualities of jazz. Jazz riffs, themselves a model of repetition with variation, frequently make reference or pay homage to base canonical works (see also McClary 2001). A potent example of this in action is Duke Ellington's suite *Such Sweet Thunder*, based on several Shakespearean plays and sonnets (1999 [1957]). Ellington's virtuoso interpretation of the Shakespearean base texts perfectly exemplifies Henry Louis Gates Jr's theory of 'signifying' in African-American culture, as cited in the Introduction, which Gates actually adopted from the practice and example of prominent jazz musicians: 'In the jazz tradition, compositions by Count Basie ("signify") and Oscar Peterson ("signifying") are structured around the ideas of formal revision and implication' (1988: 123).

Even more recently we have the working example of sampling in musical genres such as rap and hip-hop, and now more generally in digital composition and electronic music contexts. Desmond Hesmondhalgh has provocatively described this as plagiarism, but more so as a cultural tactic or interventionist act, indicating ways in which debates about plagiarism and intellectual and literary property rights need to be demobilized in more positive, socially productive and empowering ways. Exploring what he describes as the 'tangled' sounds of rap, Hesmondhalgh queries the extent to which rap's interest in appropriation, intertextuality and 'recontextualization' can be subjected to conventional copyright law: 'To what extent does the act of recontextualisation, the placing of the sample next to the other sounds, mean that authorship (and the resultant financial rewards) should be attributed to those sampling rather than sampled?' (2000: 280). That 2015 has witnessed the largest settlement against music deemed by the courts

to have ‘sampled’ the work of Marvin Gaye suggests that this moment in legal terms is still some way away. As with the furore over *Last Orders* (and other literary homage cases which ended up in the courtroom rather than in the press) we are dealing with a complex ethics of indebtedness, although with the added complication, as pointed out by David Sanjek (1994: 349), that in the music industry musical language doesn’t carry quotation marks. Perhaps in a more celebratory recognition of richness and potential we need to view literary adaptation and appropriation from a vantage point that sees them as actively creating a new cultural and aesthetic product, one that stands alongside the texts that have provided inspiration, and, in the process, enriches rather than ‘robs’ them. This would provide ‘grounds’ perhaps for exonerating Graham Swift of all charges, and establishing in the process a more vibrant methodology for exploring the appropriative instinct.