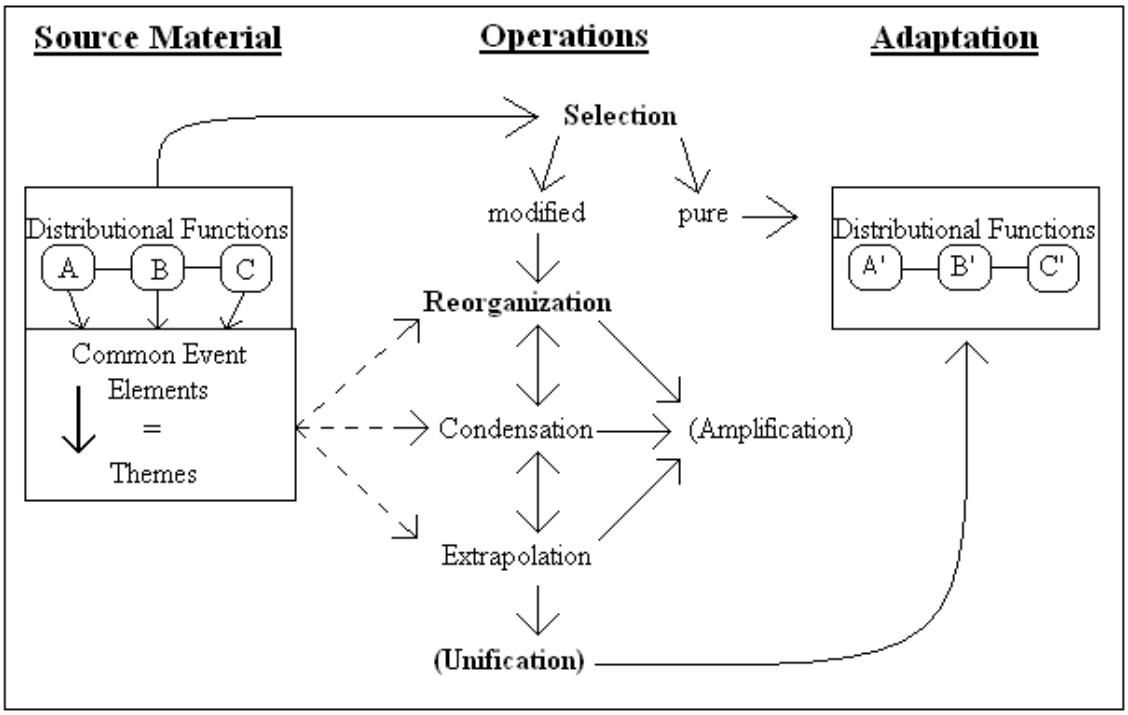
Dear Students,

As the oldest form of cultural transmission upon which all human communication is built, narrative is essential to our understanding popular culture. I previously defined narrative as "a series of contextualized and interrelated events that conclude with a climax" (First Summary) and described each of these components in detail. It was explained that the rhetorical meaning of a narrative could be determined by investigating *character traits* and *narrative outcomes* in light of *event contexts*." While this can be a powerful tool for uncovering meaning, it is possible to take this method further and explore how narratives change over time, a process referred to as *adaptation*.

Adaptation is central to our understanding of mediated cultural texts of any sort because fundamental human traits, motives, and conflicts remain the same. Therefore, there are only a finite number of stories to tell and adaptation, broadly considered, allows us to trace the archetypal origins of human values as they are expressed through character traits. Through a nearly comprehensive review of the literature on adaptation studies, I developed the following model to explain the migration of structural elements from source material to adaptation. This model describes structural adaptations only. A separate model will be provided for "thematic" adaptations.



At the top of this diagram, there are three headings. "Source Material" (left) refers to the articulation of the narrative in its original (or prior) medium, "Adaptation" (right) refers to the re-articulation of the narrative within the new medium, and "Operations" (center) refer to the decisions made in the process of constructing the adaptation.

Let us begin understanding this model with the boxes on the left. *Distributional Functions* (McFarlane, 1996) simply refer to the events in the order that they occur within a narrative. As described in the first summary, an event is "a continuous span of time and space that occurs in a setting, which may involve one or more characters and/or objects, but must feature one or more actions. A setting is a physical place, a character is a person in the setting, an object is an inanimate entity within the setting, and an action is a physical occurrence within the setting."

Simply put, you can think of events as situated instances distributed across the timeline of the narrative: Event A happens first, then B, then C, and so on. Taken together, these events will have certain things in common that serve as constants throughout the narrative. Fundamentally, these constants are characters and conflicts. These constants or *common event elements* are indicated in the bottom-left box as *themes*. In turn, these themes (or certain selected themes) may serve to inform how particular operations (i.e. reorganization, condensation, and extrapolation) are executed. Next, we define these operations:

- Selection: Taking particular events from the source for inclusion in the adaptation.
- Reorganization: Reordering of selected events in the adaptation.
- Condensation: Reduction of event elements (characters, actions, objects, settings) in the adaptation.
- Extrapolation: The addition of new material to selected events in the adaptation.

The "operations" portion of the model begins with the selection of events from the "source material" before proceeding through the operations defined above. Any number of events may or may not be selected. Take note as well that the operations need not occur in a designated order and that they may not all be employed. This is reflected in the model through the use of the vertical double arrows.

The "pure" route in the model allows for the hypothetical possibility of an adaptation that corresponds perfectly to the source material. There are, however, no examples of this and it serves only as a point of comparison for the modified adaptation.

Through the operations defined above, a modified adaptation customizes and reconfigures the narrative in a new medium. Events may be rearranged (reorganization) and details may be removed (condensation) or added (extrapolation), but these decisions are constrained by the themes from the original or prior source material. This is indicated by the dashed arrows in the model. Ultimately, characters and conflicts tend to persist, though some may be emphasized over others; an operation referred to as "amplification."

- Amplification: The emphasis of some themes or events above others.

The purpose of applying these operations is to create a unified story through the adaptive medium. By selecting, reorganizing, condensing, and extrapolating events from the source, a new unity is achieved in the adapted narrative.

- Unification: The adaptation is constructed from the events of the source material and combined into a singular narrative.

This adapted narrative appears on the right side of the model as the new set of distributional functions: A^1, B^1, C^1.

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The model above is an analysis of the process of adaptation, but how can it be applied to analyzing, interpreting and critiquing popular culture?

Changes that are made via the operations in the process of reconstructing the narrative for the adaptation are subject to ideological motives. While there may be cases in which decisions are made based on practical concerns, the choice to select, reorganize, condense and extrapolate the original content are subject to political, social, and philosophical agendas. The task of the critic is to unpack the hidden motives using the forensics afforded through the process described above.