UDC 821.111.09-31 McEwan I.
https://doi.org/10.46630/jkal.2022.22
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AN ALTERNATIVE WORLD-VIEW: IAN MCEWAN'S *NUTSHELL*

Abstract: The goal of this paper is to explore the alternative modes of representing Shakespeare's *Hamlet* in McEwan's novel *Nutshell* and to determine the purpose of including Shakespearean references in the latter. We shall explore Harold Bloom's views on the anxiety of influence as opposed to Julia Kristeva's notion of intertextuality and Linda Hutcheon's theory of adaptation, in which intertextuality is used to present previous literary works solely as material for constructing a new postmodern literary framework. By analyzing intertextual relationships, this paper shows that *Nutshell* is a postmodern adaptation of *Hamlet.* The very form of narration chosen by McEwan, namely that of an unborn fetus, raises the question of the reliability of the narrator. The main source of unreliability, apart from the age and limited viewpoint of the narrator, is the wide spectrum of genres displayed in the novel, varying from a psychological thriller, to a murder mystery to a fantasy novel. The novel may thus be seen as a postmodern alternative in two manners: as a rewriting of Shakespeare's *Hamlet with the aim of presenting contemporary readers with an alternative to a well-known story and as a utilization of an alternative narrative technique that culminates in a questionably reliable narrator.*

Keywords: Ian McEwan, *Nutshell*, Shakespeare*, Hamlet*, intertextuality, influence, unreliable narrator, alternative, adaptation, postmodernism.

1. Intertextuality or influence?

Intertextuality is not a new concept, but what has changed over time is the way that it is perceived and defined by various literary figures. Modern theorists claim that interpreting a text consists of tracing its relations to other texts by which reading becomes a movement from text to text, navigating its way through an entire system of texts. "Meaning becomes something which exists between a text and all the other texts to which it refers and relates, moving out from the independent text into a network of textual relations. The text becomes the intertext" (Graham, 2000, p. 1).

Julia Kristeva, credited with inventing the term *intertextuality* in the mid-1960s, argues that authors do not create from their own minds, but from a compilation of existing texts, thus making a text "a permutation of texts, an intertextuality in the space of a given text, **several utterances, taken from other texts, intersect and neutralize one another**" (Kristeva, 1980, p. 36). Texts are not finished products, but rather always in a state of production, open to various interpretations. Texts are not individual and isolated objects, but a compilation of cultural textuality. A text is thus

"constructed as a mosaic of quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another" (p. 66).

Intertextuality influences the way one reads a text by presenting the reader with the sense that there are gaps to be filled. A multitude of references that navigate the readers' interpretation may be found. There are two modalities of reader response:

> One is the readers' feeling that they need surcease from the demands the text puts on their ingenuity, and from the text's departures from accepted linguistic usage or narrative and descriptive conventions. The other is the constraints or limitations the same text puts on the readers' search for that relief. (Riffaterre, 1990, p. 57)

While various references to other texts may ease the process of interpretation and guide the reader to what one may consider the "correct" meaning intended by the author, they can also put pressure on the reader and limit their freedom of interpretation. Guiding the reader in a certain direction requires closing off any other path the reader might have chosen to take. Therefore, it must be recognized that a text within a text will sway the readers' expectations of the work.

The concept of influence gained popularity in literary theory around the eighteenth century according to authors such as Harold Bloom (1997), Jay Clayton and Eric Rothstein (1991). Influence, although not an ancient term, appears to have been around for a very long time, while intertextuality is of a more recent date:

> The concept of influence is grounded in the modern dualism of consciousness and the external world. In this scheme, influence is represented as external energy that enters the author's mind and covertly, without the discernable procedures that were key for *imitatio*, leads him or her to write differently than she/he otherwise would. (Juvan, 2008, p. 50)

Harold Bloom compresses the theory of intertextuality and presents it as a relationship between a particular text and its precursor. Bloom focuses on the inner life of a poet and their aspirations and motivations for writing poetry. Poetry is defined by Bloom as "misunderstanding, misinterpretation, misalliance" (p. 95). Each new poet is seen as having one primary precursor, one dominant influence which they must overcome to establish their own voice. The new poet must fight this preceding poet for possession of the poetic muse, for it is only by destroying this father figure that the new poet will be able to find their own voice[1]. The anxiety a poet feels is based on the greatness of their precursor thus "a poem is not an overcoming of anxiety, but is that anxiety" (p. 94).

Clayton and Rothstein (1991, p. 3) believe the term intertextuality is "a generational marker for younger critics who end up doing very much what their elders do with influence and its partner, like 'context', 'allusion', and 'tradition.'" The ideas of influence and intertextuality have been widely contested in literary history, the main difference being that influence mainly focuses on canonical works

[1] Bloom's images are deliberately aggressive: The poet as son must kill his poetic father in order to become completely independent and achieve his own poetic voice. Only strong poets can overcome this anxiety of influence.

and major literary figures, while intertextuality excludes the author as an individual. Intertextuality refers to all texts as a sort of web or network that include not only other literary works but cultural, historical and social aspects. In this respect, intertextuality can be seen as an "enlargement of a familiar idea or as an entirely new concept to replace the outdated notion of influence" (p. 3). Intertextuality may be seen as encompassing the notion of influence and all that it includes.

The main difference between Julia Kristeva's notion of intertextuality and Harold Bloom's anxiety of influence is that Bloom's theory shifts from texts to people. While the focus of his French predecessor's studies were literary texts and their impact on interpretation, Bloom put the poet in the center of attention, drawing on his anxiety as the sole reason elements of one text may be found within another. Bloom's theory represents a narrowing of intertextuality.

> The function of Bloom's theory of influence, certainly the function of the Freudian analogies which structure it, is to keep everything in the family. Intertextuality is the family archive; when one explores it one stays wholly within the traditional canon of major poets. The text is an intertextual construct, comprehensible only in terms of other texts which it prolongs, completes, transforms, and sublimates; but when we ask what these other texts are, they turn out to be central poems of a single great precursor. (Culler, 1981, p. 120)

Roland Barthes (1981, p. 39) expresses his view that "any text is an intertext; other texts are present in it, at varying levels, in more or less recognizable forms: the texts of the previous and surrounding culture." He believes a text is a woven web of citations from past texts, which are based on readers' previous experiences that have been reconstructed to fit the purpose of the current text. "No text is read independently of the reader's experience of other texts" (Eco, 1979, p. 21). What greatly differentiates intertextuality from theories of influence is the anonymity and all-inclusiveness of intertextuality. While influence is reduced to the personal relationship between two literary figures, "the intertext is a general field of anonymous formulae whose original can scarcely ever be located; of unconscious or automatic quotations, given without quotation-marks" (Barthes, 1981, p. 39). Influence can never be unconscious or automatic in Bloom's theory because the young poet is aware of the parent poet's influence and is actively trying to overcome it. Thus, the goal of a text written by a poet under the anxiety of influence would be to conceal said influence, if not completely avoid it.

3. *Nutshell* as a Postmodern Alternative to *Hamlet*

The adaptation of one work to fit a new audience is not a novel concept, but it gains new meaning within the context of postmodern theories. Adaptations are usually viewed as secondary, a lowering of the standards set by the source text. This is especially the case in situations where we are presented with an adaptation of a literary work that has switched mediums. The question, however, would be what

makes adaptations so popular in our culture if they are indeed viewed as inferior to the source text? Linda Hutcheon (2006, p. 4) expresses her belief in the pleasure of adaptations, saying that the pleasure "comes simply from repetition with variation, from the comfort of ritual combined with the piquancy of surprise. Recognition and resemblance are part of the pleasure (and risk) of experiencing an adaptation". Audiences derive greater pleasure from something that they feel is familiar, safe and comforting. The ritual element can be compared to a child listening to the same story before bed over and over again, always enjoying the soothing knowledge of what will happen next. Audiences also enjoy recognizing the intertextual aspects, hunting for clues and allusions within a work. The appeal of adaptation lies in the mixture of familiarity and novelty.

Nutshell can be understood as an adaptation of *Hamlet* because it utilizes a familiar story and alters various aspects to fit the demands of the new literary form. The altered mode of narration, as well as the changes made to the setting and plot, establish McEwan's novel as a postmodern alternative to Shakespeare's well-known tragedy. The demands of the time and readership have created the necessity to make changes to the story to fit into a time that has alternative world views.

Apart from a change in medium, that is, transforming a play into a novel, when discussing the aforementioned works we also notice a shift in the mode of engagement. Namely, Hutcheon (2006, p. 22) distinguishes between the telling mode (novels) and a showing mode (plays and films). Transforming a play that is both aural and visual into a novel emphasizes the blindness of the narrator and his inability to rely on his senses, thus his unreliability in conveying the story. In the showing mode, the audience has direct perception and can decide for themselves whom to believe. The power to notice, or not notice, details on the stage/screen remains with the viewers. With a novel, on the other hand, our perception of events remains completely based on our imagination. A novel such as *Nutshell* further emphasizes the blindness of the audience, as it does not describe a clear image of the surroundings but only a second-hand perspective. The fetus is only able to use his imagination in depicting the outside world, just as readers must rely on their own minds to visualize the story.

3.1. The Voice of Hamlet

Many of the more famous quotations from *Hamlet* can be found in the novel, but their tone is altered and they are given a new context due to the position of the narrator. The change of perspective is postmodern in the sense that it presents us with a story that has been unheard up until now, an alternative narrative that will give voice to the previously unheard. The numerous references to *Hamlet* made throughout McEwan's novel establish it is an intertextual web, relying on the interpretation of the previous text for its meaning.

The plot of *Nutshell* is fairly straightforward – an unborn baby overhears the planning and execution of the murder of his father, the poet John Cairncross, by his beloved wife and brother, Trudy and Claude. McEwan evokes images of Hamlet at

the very beginning of the novel by presenting us with a description of the fetus trapped in his mother's womb. The words used to describe the surroundings are *bound* and *confinement* which can be connected to the way Hamlet felt in his environment, that is, Denmark:

> My eyes close nostalgically when I remember how I once drifted in my translucent body bag, floated dreamily in the bubble of my thoughts through my private ocean in slow-motion somersaults, colliding gently against the transparent *bounds* of my *confinement*, the confiding membrane that vibrated with, even as it muffled, the voices of conspirators in a vile enterprise. (McEwan, 2016, p. 1, my emphasis)

By starting the novel in such a manner, McEwan establishes a connection between the fetus and Hamlet. The title of the novel is a reference to *Hamlet*, as it utilizes part of a sentence uttered by Hamlet. We also notice that these lines are used as the epigraph of the novel: "O God! I could be bounded in a nut-shell, and count myself a king of infinite space; were it not that I have bad dreams" (Hamlet, 2.2.249-251). The metaphor of a nutshell is appropriate as it relates to the notion of an embryo in an amniotic sac. The fetus's prison is the womb, just as Hamlet's is Denmark. Paradoxically, the space where a fetus should feel the safest is turning out to be a hostile and restricting environment. The epigraph leads us to regard the fetus as a king of his infinite space which can be understood to express the boundlessness of imagination. A reference to this line is made once more in the novel:

> To be bound in a nutshell, see the world in two inches of ivory, in a grain of sand. Why not, when all of literature, all of art, of human endeavour, is just a speck in the universe of possible things. And even this universe may be a speck in a multitude of actual and possible universes. (McEwan, 2016, p. 62)

This reference informs the readers that they are presented with a work relating to Shakespeare's famous tragedy. Making this connection early on enables readers to continue reading the novel with Shakespearean motifs in mind, that is, it enables them to recognize further allusions and connections between the two works. Given the overt use of quotations and allusions, McEwan is not hiding the fact that he drew inspiration from *Hamlet* and that he is presenting us with its contemporary alternative. We may conclude that McEwan was not under the anxiety of influence when composing his work, but rather, was utilizing parts of a famous story and weaving them into his own text.

When the Queen criticizes Hamlet for his black apparel after his father's passing and tries to confront him by reminding him that everybody must die, Hamlet responds with the following lines: "'Seems', madam? Nay, it *is*; I know not 'seems'" (Hamlet 1.2.76). When contemplating his mother's involvement in conspiring, the fetus also utters: "Seems, Mother? No, it *is.* You are. You are involved" (McEwan, 2016, p. 2). Hamlet's line is so clearly visible in the novel, that it is even emphasized in the same manner by using italics. While Gertrude's role in her late husband's demise remains unclear in *Hamlet*, as well as her involvement with Claudius prior to the King's death, McEwan sheds light on a side of the story that was untouched

in the source text thus establishing Trudy as an alternative to the naïve and loving Gertrude.

While continuing to establish a bond between the fetus and Hamlet, McEwan alludes to Shakespeare's famous soliloquy in the third scene of the first act. The fetus contemplates his life and the purpose of his existence: "So, getting closer, my idea was To *be.* Or if not that, its grammatical variant *is*" (p. 2). Just as there is a dilemma in Hamlet's thoughts, the fetus also realizes the crux of his situation. Instead of contemplating life after death, the fetus muses on the notion of life after birth. He is aware that "the beginning of conscious life was the end of illusion, the illusion of non-being, and the eruption of the real" (p. 2-3). Leaving the womb, just as leaving the Earth, would set one into the depths of the unknown, a realm undiscovered and uncertain. Whether it is the end of life and the beginning of death, or the end of illusion and the beginning of reality, we can observe the uncertainty of what is to come as opposed to the security of one's current situation.

Yet another instance of intertextuality is the disgust the fetus expresses at Claude calling his mother *mouse*. "His mouse! What humiliation. In the palm of his hand. Pet. Powerless. Fearful. Contemptible. Disposable. Oh to be his mouse! When she knows it's madness. So hard to resist. Can she fight it? Is she a woman or a mouse?" (p. 112). Gertrude and Trudy both share this pet name which implies weakness and a lack of character. The fetus and Hamlet regard it as humiliation and madness that the Queen and Trudy should tolerate such indignity. The fetus implies that his mother is aware of the madness and shamefulness of the situation but is reluctant to do anything about it. The relationship between mother and son is an ambiguous one, simultaneously expressing disdain and an unbreakable bond. Both the fetus and Hamlet feel disgusted by their mothers' actions, but that does not reduce their love. The fetus depicts his mother as "being selfish, devious, cruel", but in the very next sentence expresses his attachment: "But wait, I love her, she's my divinity and I need her. I take it back! I spoke in anguish" (p. 15).

Perhaps the most memorable and frequently quoted lines from Shakespeare are from Hamlet's soliloquy about suicide. The fetus also contemplates life and death and considers suicide as a solution to his ailments. The difference is that the fetus actually attempts suicide and fails, while Hamlet's musings remained in the realm of ideas. The fetus describes his attempt in the following manner: "To take my life I'll need the cord, three turns around my neck of the mortal coil […] I can do it. Harder!" (p. 127-128). The phrase *mortal coil* is taken from *Hamlet* but given a more literal meaning. The fetus, unlike Hamlet, does not waver; he is resolute in ending his life but is prevented by his lack of strength and inability to hold on to the umbilical cord long enough.

"Hamlet will not do anything prematurely; something in him is determined not to be overdetermined. His freedom partly consists in not being too soon, not being early" (Bloom, 1998, p. 407). Just as Hamlet is careful not to be early, so is the fetus which is seen through the fact that he does not induce his own labor prematurely to rescue his father but arrives on this Earth when everything has unfolded. The fetus is torn between two different attitudes towards his mother's crime. He is outraged

at her actions and holds her to be morally corrupt, but at the same time he feels love for her and does not give up hope in her redemption. He supports his mother even though she does not refer to him throughout the entire novel and shows no obvious signs of affection. On the other hand, the fetus feels the need to intervene and prevent the crime, or at least take revenge upon the completion.

The ghost in *Hamlet* arrives at the beginning of the play with the intention of stirring revenge. The ghost of John Cairncross, on the other hand, does not serve to set the plot in action as he appears at the end of the novel. Perhaps his function is similar to the ghost of Banquo in Macbeth – representing the guilty conscious of the murders, or in this case, the son's guilt for being unable to save his father. The murder in the novel is more hands-off than the one in Hamlet because the poison is poured into a drink which John consumes away from the murderers. Although, there is a reference to the way Hamlet's father was killed when Trudy and Claude discuss alternative methods of murder: "It's what we should have used. Diphenhydramine. Kind of antihistamine. People are saying the Russians used it on that spy they locked in a sports bag. Poured it into his ear" (McEwan, 2016, p. 117).

Finally, McEwan uses a transformation of Hamlet's last words to end his novel. He changes the famous line from "The rest is silence" (Hamlet, 5.2. 351) to "The rest is chaos" (McEwan, 2016, p. 199), thus inverting the narrative of the source text. A stark difference between the two works is that *Hamlet* ends with death and *Nutshell* ends with birth, that is, life. This can be understood as McEwan completing the life cycle and reincarnating Hamlet in his narrator. It also brings the entire novel full circle, enclosing the contents of the novel within literary references from the play.

3.2. The Unreliability of the Narrator

Umberto Eco emphasizes the existence of texts that offer the reader "solutions he does not expect, challenging every overcoded intertextual frame as well as the reader's predictive indolence" (Eco, 1979, p. 33). These new solutions require the reader to be flexible in "validating (or at least in not contradicting) the widest possible range of interpretive proposals" (p. 33). In McEwan's novel, this is exemplified by the author's highly unusual narrator – an unborn fetus. By making the fetus the sole source of information and authority in charge of relaying the message, McEwan has presented his readers with an unfamiliar situation that requires them to leave the comfort of previously established perspectives and go down an unpredictable interpretative path.

However, the use of a narrator with such a unique perspective is not without cause. The age and position of the narrator raise the question of his reliability which in turn connects the work to its source. Namely, the unreliability of the narrator is something that can be found in Hamlet as well, with the main difference being in the degree and cause of unreliability. While Hamlet is considered a poor narrator in part because of his madness[2] (whether feigned or true), the narrator of McEwan's novel

[2] Hamlet's madness is not the only reason for his unreliability as a narrator. Other possible causes may be his emotional investment in the events and people in question.

makes it difficult for the readers to trust him because of his limited experience and dulled senses.

A novel with a fetus as a narrator presents a narratological issue as the fetus by definition is incapable of speaking, let alone relating the details of events. The fetus does not have all of his senses available to him and has to rely mostly on his sense of hearing to gain information about the outside world. "How is it that I, not even young, not even born yesterday, could know so much, or know enough to be wrong about so much? I have my sources, I *listen*" (McEwan, 2016, p. 4). The novel's depth and literary contribution lie in the narrator, as without him, the worth of the novel as a retelling of *Hamlet* may be questioned.

The unreliability of the narrator stems primarily from his lack of vision. The fetus must rely on other senses to grasp the world around him, but even the senses available to him are sometimes dulled by intoxication or external factors such as noise. The narrator admits the unreliability of the story he is presenting on several occasions. Not knowing what colors look like is proof of unreliability as it means that the narrator has never seen the world outside of his mother's womb. "When I hear 'blue', which I've never seen, I imagine some kind of mental event that's fairly close to 'green' – which I've never seen" (p. 1). Though not the only way of gathering information, our sense of sight is our most trustworthy sense. We believe something when we see it, and in this case, the narrator has not seen anything.

Trudy spends most of the novel sipping on wine, thus intoxicating her unborn child. The fetus is intoxicated for most of the novel and relates his experience under the influence of wine as something pleasant but disorienting:

> But oh, a joyous, blushful Pinot Noir, or a gooseberried Sauvignon, sets me turning and tumbling across my secret sea, reeling off the walls of my castle, the bouncy castle that is my home […] Now I take my pleasures sedately, and by the second class my speculations bloom with that license whose name is poetry. (p. 7)

Somebody who is in an altered state of mind, whether it is due to madness or substance abuse, cannot be considered a reliable source of information, or at the very least should be approached with caution.

The fetus discloses that Trudy and Claude "often turn to plotting, but in the room's tiled echo, against running taps, their words are lost to me" (p. 23). Even his only available sense is dulled at times and cannot be a reliable source. He also admits to sometimes dozing off in the middle of their conversations and not hearing everything (p. 160). The fetus narrates events he was not present for (p. 36-38) beginning his story by reminding his audience that everything is "purely an exercise of the imagination. Nothing here is real" (p. 35). In addition to lacking sight, the fetus admits to lacking adequate social experience (p. 67), which is a major issue since social experience and knowledge of human behavior is a trait most often found in reliable narrators. McEwan pushes narrative boundaries with his narrator and brings the novel to the edge of reliability.

*"*Consciousness is his salient characteristic; he is the most aware and knowing figure ever conceived. We have the illusion that nothing is lost upon his fictive

personage" (Bloom, 1998, p. 404). Harold Bloom described Hamlet in this manner and this same description can be applied to the fetus. Could there be anybody more aware than a fetus whose awareness has begun even before his existence in the world? Most prominent in Bloom's description is the *illusion* of knowledge, which we recognize in our young narrator, assuming he knows everything about the world without having experienced it. Despite having profound awareness of his surroundings, Hamlet displays an inability to act caused by a moral dilemma and deep musings on the meaning of life, death and revenge. The fetus is also unable to act, but his inability is physical, as he is literally unable to leave the womb to prevent the murder.

Trudy and the fetus are one, as the fetus expresses: "I am an organ in her body, not separate from her thoughts" (McEwan, 2016, p. 42). The fetus deeply feels all of Trudy's sensations, thoughts, emotions and dilemmas. Similarly to Hamlet, it is sensitive to the stimulus derived from his environment. Hamlet is a character whose main trait is that he feels everything so deeply. His father's death, his mother's betrayal, his uncle's treason – all this stirs Hamlet's emotions and throws him into a deeply pensive and melancholy mood. A person with sharpened senses can be prone to exaggeration, more heightened emotionality and unpredictable behavior, thus being perceived as an unreliable narrator.

3.3. Distinguishing genre boundaries

While our knowledge of Hamlet influences our understanding of McEwan's text and steers our interpretation in certain directions, we may also consider that McEwan's novel gives insights into *Hamlet.* By presenting the story in such an alternative manner, McEwan sheds light on aspects of the play that were previously neglected. One of the unsolved questions of the play is Gertrude's involvement in her husband's murder. The plot of the novel differs from the plot of Hamlet in numerous ways, most prominently in Gertrude's involvement in her husband's murder. Trudy and Claude conspire to kill the unsuspecting mild-mannered poet, while in *Hamlet*, Gertrude is represented as innocent in this crime. This plot difference can be perceived as pointing out what *Hamlet* has omitted or not displayed overtly enough. By presenting Trudy as an accomplice to the murder, McEwan casts light on one of the enigmas surrounding the character of Gertrude. Perhaps McEwan wanted to illuminate the grey areas of the play that have remained unproven in literary criticism. "Whose son was Hamlet? How far back in time did Gertrude's 'incest' and 'adultery' begin? Since the play refuses to say (though in its earlier version it may have been less ambiguous), neither we nor Hamlet knows" (Bloom,1998, p. 418).

The novel may also shed light on Hamlet's delayed action as it presents the story as a murder mystery. Hamlet may not have been hesitant to act, but rather just waiting to collect sufficient evidence of the crime before exacting his revenge. If this were the case, then the entire interpretation of Hamlet's character must be revised. The most striking difference between the two works is that Hamlet finds out about the murder from his father's ghost after the fact, while the fetus has a front-row

seat to the creation and realization of the plan. The fetus gradually uncovers new information about his mother's affair and the vile plan she and her lover devise. At the beginning of the novel, the fetus is only aware that his mother is having an affair with a man named Claude, only to discover later in the novel that Claude is his uncle. Unlike most murder mysteries where the mysterious element is in discovering the murder, here this information is given at the onset, but the suspense of the novel is derived from the anticipation of whether or not they will be caught. McEwan provides his readers with the tools to perceive *Hamlet* through different genres and thus opens a series of alternative readings.

Apart from manifesting signs of a murder mystery, there are other genres at play within the novel such as fantasy. The fantastic element is seen in the appearance of the ghost, which is explained away as a hallucination[3]. Tzvetan Todorov (1973, p. 25) describes the fantastic as follows: "In a world which is indeed our world, the one we know, a world without devils, sylphides, or vampires, there occurs an event which cannot be explained by the laws of this same familiar world." In *Nutshell* this event is not only the appearance of the ghost but the very concept of a talking fetus narrating the events. The fantastic event causes the readers to hesitate, but they must ultimately accept the world as presented. This novel belongs to the subtype of the fantastic called the marvelous as it does not give any explanation of the talking fetus and expects the readers to simply accept the narrator. One of the most important features of the fantastic genre is the reader's acceptance of the fantastic event and complete integration into the story. The reader cannot question the text and "he will reject allegorical as well as poetic interpretations" (p. 33). The merging of multiple genres in one work can be explained in two ways: as an instance of intertextuality, including elements from a variety of different texts and as one more reason to question the reliability of the narrator.

4. To Adapt or Not to Adapt?

The number of literary references used by McEwan, as previously discussed, points to the fact that McEwan was not burdened by Shakespeare's influence and had no intention of overcoming him. *Nutshell* cannot be viewed as a materialization of McEwan's anxiety of influence, since McEwan made no effort to conceal his use of *Hamlet* when constructing his own work. According to Bloom, if the novel was an instance of influence, then we wouldn't be able to detect the source so easily, as that would go against the notion of trying to overcome the parent poet and establish one's poetic voice. McEwan does not try to undermine, conceal, correct or invert the source text. He draws inspiration from it and uses this material in shaping his

[3] Todorov (1973, p. 41) distinguishes between two types of the fantastic: the uncanny and the marvelous. "If he [the author] decides that the laws of reality remain intact and permit an explanation of the phenomenon described, we say that the work belongs to another genre: the uncanny. If, on the contrary, he decides that new laws of nature must be entertained to account for the phenomena, we enter the genre of the marvelous."

own work. McEwan cannot be seen as giving up and relinquishing his power to his predecessor because there is no evidence to suggest a struggle to begin with. By quoting Shakespeare on the first page of the novel and including various allusions and bits of exact lines from the play, McEwan is noticeably illustrating his novel's involvement with *Hamlet.*

What differentiates adaptations from parodies, or works created under the anxiety of influence, as Bloom would say, is the overt representation of ideas and the openness in expressing their connection to previous works. Adaptations do not bother trying to hide their sources; on the contrary, they emphasize it. "Like parodies, adaptations have an overt and defining relationship to prior texts, usually revealingly called 'sources'. Unlike parodies, however, adaptations usually openly announce this relationship" (Hutcheon, 2006, p. 3). Adaptations should not be judged by their fidelity to the source text since the change in medium often necessitates various changes in the work.

The author's conspicuous use of literary references from *Hamlet* leads to the conclusion that McEwan was not under the anxiety of influence while writing his novel. Instead, the novel is a postmodern adaptation of a classic and this is openly expressed by the author. *Nutshell* represents a postmodern, creative and radical revision of *Hamlet*. The story of Hamlet is perceived differently based on the social, cultural and political circumstances it was written in and the audience it was intended for. Thus the adaptation or rewriting of the source text must be inherently different in order to fit contemporary literary demands. A postmodern age requires a postmodern Hamlet, one that questions the grand narrative, creates doubts about the stability and reliability of the narrative and blurs genre boundaries.

5. Conclusion

Hamlet's involvement in *Nutshell* is an intertextual game, nothing more than a postmodern adaptation of a well-known past work. The purpose may be to shed light on hidden aspects of the plot or to familiarize a new generation of readers with the popular story by transposing it into our contemporary world. McEwan presents his readers with an alternative to a well-known story that not only recontextualizes the events of the play but also draws out possible hidden meanings and novel interpretations. However, measuring *Nutshell* against *Hamlet* would be unfair, as all adaptations are not meant to exceed the source text, nor take its place. "Adaptation is repetition, but repetition without replication" (Hutcheon, 2006, p. 7). An adaptation cannot be viewed as a replication because of the change in medium. No two works can express the same ideas in the same manner due to restrictions in the medium. Following in Bloom's footsteps, we emphasize the humanity of the author and put forth the idea that no two people can write identically, as each work has the author's stamp of personality. Adapting is not only reinterpreting but recreating. An adaptation can be seen as an overtly acknowledged transformation of another work, a creative process of reinterpreting and an "intertextual engagement with the adapted

work" (p. 8). Therefore, "an adaptation is a derivation that is not derivative – a work that is second without being secondary. It is its own palimpsestic thing" (p. 9). *Nutshell*, however reliant on *Hamlet* for its interpretation, stands on its own as a literary achievement. It is a postmodern retelling of the famous story, but not its replica. McEwan changes the plot and adds elements that greatly distinguish his work not only from its source but from a majority of the literary canon.

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ALTERNATIVNI POGLED NA SVET: *ORAHOVA LJUSKA* IJANA MAKJUANA

Rezime

Cilj rada jeste ispitati različite načine predstavljanja *Hamleta* Vilijama Šekspira u romanu *Orahova ljuska* Ijana Makjuana. Uporedićemo Blumovo viđenje intertekstualnosti sa postmodernim teorijama u kojima tekstovi služe samo kao materijal za izradu novog dela. Analizom intertekstualnih odnosa, nastojimo da pokažemo da je *Orahova ljuska* postmoderna adaptacija Šekspirovog *Hamleta*. Izborom fetusa za naratora, I. Makjuan dovodi u pitanje pouzdanost naracije. Pored uzrasta i ograničenog pogleda naratora, glavni izvor nepouzdanosti jeste širok spektar žanrova koji možemo uočiti u romanu, počevši od psihološkog trilera, misterije, sve do fantastike. Stoga roman možemo smatrati postmodernom alternativom iz dva razloga: kao ponovno ispisivanje *Hamleta* kako bi savremenim čitaocima bila predstavljena alternativa dobro poznate priče ili kao upotreba alternativne narativne tehnike koja kao posledicu ima naratora u čiju se pouzdanost može posumnjati.

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