



A STUDY ON ENGLISH NOVELS INTO FILM ADAPTATIONS

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APA Citation:

Arulnayagam.R, (2023). A STUDY ON ENGLISH NOVELS INTO FILM ADAPTATIONS, *Journal of Indian Languages and Indian literature in English*, 01(01), 74-81; 2023

Submission Date: 15/10/2023

Acceptance Date: 01/11/2023

Abstract

The present study is Theoretical Framework. It is indeed introductory in nature and in particular it offers an introduction to the nature, definitions, functions and processes of film adaptations. Right from the beginning of the film making the source materials for the films whether from Hollywood or from Bollywood came from the classics, epics, and mythological works and later on from the novels by eminent novelists. It has become a regular feature of the film making to make use of the source material from such sources of the print media. The novels offer verbal marks which acquire meanings on account of their musical associations, pictorial quality, ornamental embellishments, figurative decorations, semantic implications, stylistic deviations, structural innovations and pragmatic features. Even an expression like 'green and golden' used by a modern Welsh poet like Dylan Thomas in the poem 'Fern Hill' gets packed and compressed into so much associative content and semantically significant raw-material that it becomes a picture in words like 'My Luv's like a red, red rose' by Robert Burns, the Scottish poet. Joseph Conrad has written stories and novels on the regions between 'land and sea' and both 'land' and 'sea' assume significant symbolic nuances in his novels. The novelist writes with an intention of 'holding up the mirror to life'. A film is the product of non-print media. It is made of visual images which are captured through a movie camera. The plot construction of a film is different from that of a novel. The shot wise, scene-wise and episode wise presentation of the entire action is recorded in the script of a film. There are stage directions in a play and similarly in the script of a film different directions are given to those who are involved in the making of a film. Acting, Photography, Music, Technique, Editing and Direction are the major departments of film making. The elements of a novel and the elements of a film are presented both theoretically and practically. There are seven points in respect of the novel from the print media and there are nine cinematic elements.

Keywords: film, novel, adaptations, plot construction, Indian writing in English

Literature is a distinctive fine art form like painting, dancing, music and sculpture. Art is the expression of the temperament of the art maker. It is the application of human creative skills. It uses imagination and creativity for an aesthetic delight. The creative essence of any kind of art gets reflected through its distinctive and innovative identity. Literature contributes art's own charms and its merits and demerits. Film which is based fully on its source book has to deviate on thematic, artistic and technical grounds from the source book. The filmmaker endeavors to remain faithful to the different aspects of the visual film media. The film maker presents different people belonging to a specific period of time who own different viewpoints. Like literature, the film adaptation contributes to its own beauty and to its merits and shortcomings. Therefore, it will be baseless to study the film adaptation of the novel by just taking into account only the fidelity of the filmmaker to the source book. A few exclusions and inclusions in the film adaptation of the novel reveal it as a distinct text.

The filmmaker presents the things of the source book in a completely new creative way of expression with new morals and advanced techniques. Herman Melville devotes a large portion of his novel about one third *Moby Dick* on describing the types and lifestyles of whales but it does not appear in its film adaptation made by Gregory of the same title. The study of the novels will be based on their literary context. Their film adaptations will have literary, artistic and technical contexts as the major components. The artistic spirit of the book lies in its literary context. In case of the film adaptation, it is in the task of filmmaking; therefore, the film production needs the appropriate use of the technical resources. Literature, as an art form, largely depends on verbal images and the film relies on visual images. In Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter*, the letter 'A' stands for adultery and an affair outside the wedlock. This is discussed as a symbol -that is, a verbal image. The adulteress was compelled to put on the letter on the front portion of her frock just above her breast and below the neck and shoulders. It is a symbolic verbal image in the novel. The same letter is prominently seen visually in the film. It is a prominent, eye catching visual image. It gets a prominent visual representation in the film.

In the film we need not to be told about who is the sinner? The actress Demi Moore wears *The Scarlet Letter* and its appearance is the dominant visual image. Literature has an ancient origin while film adaptation is a product of modern age. In this regard, it will be fruitful to employ Derrida's view about the birth of the reader as the death of the writer. The views of the new critics of studying the text of any art form engulfing in point to the artistic merit rather than any personal details of the creators. Literature is an art form like others which inherits some potential of other art forms. The transmission of certain potentials of one form of art into another is also the essence of Art in general the transmission from print media (Book) to non print media like film. Similarly, film adaptation is considered as the confluence of the other forms of art like- A film combines or mixes or intermingle elements of drama, novel, poetry, music and painting. William Jinks, the popular American educator and critic brilliantly describes how the film is a product of different art forms in the words like-

"If a modern film is carefully considered, it becomes evident that the film is heavily indebted to other older art forms. For example it draws freely of live theatre especially the techniques of staging, lightening, movement and gestures; from the novel it borrows structure characterization, theme and point of view; from poetry an understanding of metaphor, symbolism and other literary tropes; from music, rhythm, repetition and counter point and from painting a sensitivity to shape and form, visual texture and color." (Jinks, 74)

The film adaptation is considered as the fusion of literature, art and science. The film adaptation is based on its source book and it continues certain traits of the source book, it represents literature. It is an art form in the sense that it pleases audiences through musical notes, the picturesque setting, the colors, lighting and the system of sound recording. It is science in the sense that it presents everything with the help and appropriate use of technical resources. Such transfers of one art to another identify some resemblances in themselves as well. The film adaptation of literature in general and of novel in

particular is the part of the process of transformation in the province of art. The ancient classics like The Ramayana and The Mahabharata or The Iliad and The Odysseys are being largely transformed into serials and films even today. The popular classics especially of social and moral concerns have been transformed into different art forms to a large extent. In this regard, the views of Roland Barthes that

"Any text is inter- text" will be fruitful. It helps to study the interferences of one art form into another on certain levels. In this respect, Julia Kristeva's views prove helpful: "Every text depends on other texts to create their system of signification."

The novel and its adaptation belong to the same elite clan which the world knows as 'Art' Morris Beja, a critic has argued that "Films and novels are two forms of a single art- the art of narrative literature." (Goodman, 2) Film adaptation is the transfer of certain things of one form of art to another. A common and regular form of film adaptation is the use of the novel. Other works considered for film adaptation are autobiography, comic books, scriptures, plays, historical sources, journalism and even other films. Tarzan films are adapted from the Tarzan's Adventures among the Apes, Joan of Arc, Napoleon have been filmed. Among them, novels are frequently adapted for films. It has been estimated that a third of all films ever made were adapted from novels. Novel is the most living and realistic form of human concern, it has been largely considered for film adaptation. The film adaptation focuses on the literary properties of novel like- character, point of view, setting, plot and symbols. These literary elements are presented in the context of the skillful technical values like- camera work, lightening and design, editing, script, sound and acting. The inclusion of certain elements of novel into film or vice versa is the essential and inevitable trend in the last 20th century and the present 21st century. Until 1960's, there was no awareness to see the literary aspects in the context of film. Gradually, the efforts of sensitive filmmakers and theorists like Griffith, Eisenstein, Bazin, Metz, Bluestone, Cohen, Andrews, Boyum and a host of others became quite fruitful to bring equal status to films like literary forms.

In India, V. Shantaram presented Kalidasa's Shakuntal twice on the screen. Tennyson's Enoch Arden is Raj Kapoor's Sangam. Three adaptations of Sharatbabu's Devdas will prove a source of literary and film criticism and appreciation. Five novels of Chetan Bhagat are filmed and two more are under production. The film adaptation of literature is the most popular and widely accepted practice in recent days. It becomes interesting to see the similar story of source book to convert into different media and viewpoints. In this connection, David Nicholls is right to express his view: An adaptation leads the cinemagoers to the original. They are led to find out what they are missing. If they already know the book, it can still illuminate a theme, a character, an idea. Although adaptations of books have been made worldwide, they are definitely more prevalent in the United States and the United Kingdom than anywhere else, though the French and Russian film world also thrive on adapting literary classics such as Crime and Punishment, Camus and Sartre's dramatic and non-dramatic works.

Novel and its film adaptation evoke different kinds of pleasures and enjoyments. Both have their own charms, distinctions and merits. The film adaptation must not be studied in the context of its faithfulness to the source text with its entirety. Both forms of art are different in many respects although one is based on the other. "Then, in the history of film technique, there came two astral hours. In Enoch Arden, D. W. Griffith outraged his superiors by alternating a medium shot with a close-up instead of filming his scene continuously in the usual manner. Griffith, in mobilizing the camera, had discovered the principle of editing. Having found the true nature of motion pictures, Griffith went on to discover, through the camera, a multitude of ways in which to render spatial movement through exciting visual rhythms. In a short time, the inter-cut, the parallel development, the extreme long shot, the fade-out, the fade-in, the dissolve, the flashback, all became common currency in editing techniques." (Bluestone, 17,18) The comparative study of the two different forms of art aims to study not only the dissimilarities and similarities between the two. It is essential to study the reason behind the selection of the book for

film adaptation. It is necessary to find out the different spirits of both art forms. Christopher Orr has rightly pointed out this thing in

“Within this critical context, the issue is not whether the adapted film is faithful to its source, but rather how the choice of a specific source and how to approach to that source to serve the film's ideology.” (Orr, 5)

The film maker selects the famous book generally based on social, political and moral subjects. The transformation of much of the portion of the book of the writer is a wonderful experience of the writer. In this connection, Cassandra Clare points out that- “I firmly believe that you can't get a good movie without risking a bad movie. A good adaptation of your book is worth it because it is such a wonderful experience to see your world translated onto the screen.” (Cassandra) The comparative study of the novels and the film adaptations in artistic context will provide an opportunity to the researcher to come across simultaneously the spirits of two different art forms. The study of the story in a written form and the similar story in a different visual form will bring delights on researcher's part. The filmmaker is tirelessly in search of the story whichever is suitable to the film art and its contemporary society with keeping an eye on financial output. Although the filmmaker selects a particular story for film adaptation, he alters the original story of the source book considering the aesthetic and practical values. The filmmaker keeps an eye on the psyche of the people of literary taste and non-literary taste in order to appeal and encompass all for grand financial output.

Filmmaking is a kind of business where the filmmaker's investment and output are taken into consideration. The filmmaker transforms the story of the source book into a new attire to attract and encompass all types of viewers. Therefore, the script writer focuses on making up the film script excellent in the province of art and likable to the viewers of the contemporary age. The film adaptation of literature has become the most common and accepted practice. The attention of the critics and theorists is largely directed towards the profound relationship between literature and its film adaptation. “Virginia Woolf, contrasting the novel and film, is especially sensitive to the unique power of the figure of speech. The images of a poet, she tells us, are compact of a thousand suggestions, of which the visual is only the most obvious: Even the simplest image:

“my love's like a red, red rose, that's newly sprung in June,” presents us with impressions of moisture and warmth and the flow of crimson and the softness of petals inextricably mixed and strung upon the lift of a rhythm which is itself the voice of the passion and the hesitation of the love. All this, which is accessible to words, and to words alone, the cinema must avoid.” (Bluestone, 21)

They seem to make an experiment on the use of the elements of literature into film and the elements of film into literature. Films represent reality but rather in a routine mechanism. But now situation and attitude have tremendously changed. Film inter-mixes various other forms of art- fine arts, temporal arts and spatial arts. Film is related to painting and its visual dimension, with music in its emotive sound and lyrical effects and with drama in its aspects of acted performance. Literature and Film are linked closely with the elements such as plot, characters, setting, dialogue and imagery. The technical resources used in the film make it effective through visual aspect. The films based on literature are based on morals and values. The attention of the script writer catches towards the critical aspect at the time of transforming the novel into adapted films. In the process of adaptation, the emphasis is given on artistic transition.

“Just as the cinema exhibits a stubborn antipathy to novels, the novel here emerges as a medium antithetical to film. Because language has laws of its own, and literary characters are inseparable from the language which forms them, the externalization of such characters often seems dissatisfying. The distinction between the character who comes to us through a screen of language and the character who comes to us in visual images may account, perhaps, for the persistent disclaimers of film commentators” (Bluestone, 23)

The novels converted into films are like Herman Melville's *Moby Dick*, Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* and Sir Walter Scott's *Ivanhoe*. Tradition of Film Adaptation: More than a century and fifteen years ago, the tradition of film adaptation started. Jules Verne was the first writer adapted to screen. Jules Verne's science fiction novel *From Earth to the Moon* and the Michael Todd directed *Around the World in Eighty Days* were adapted into films right from 1902 onwards. Adaptations of the established literary canon became a successful marketing strategy about a century ago. Bulwar 21 Lytton's *The Last Days of Pompeii* (1908) and Henriek Sienkiewicks *Quo Vadis* (1895) were adapted as super spectacular movies. There is *Spartacus* (1951) based on the Roman historical figure in the novel and film having the same title. Modern history features in works like *An Affair to Remember From Here to Eternity*, *A Farewell to Arms* and *For Whom the Bell tolls*. The mission of film itself was to introduce literary classics to the masses. Adapted films acquired a respectability and distinction. The films like *Wuthering Heights*, *The Wizard of Oz* (1939), *Good Bye Mr. Chips* (1934) and *Gone with the Wind* (1939) are based on the novels. *The Mistress of Spice*, *The Namesake*, *Godan* and *Gaban* are based on the novels by Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, Jhumpa Lahiri and Premchand, the father figure in Hindi Literature which have been used for adapting them into films. History of Film Adaptation: Films have been converted from novels or plays from the very beginning of the emergence of films. Such a change or conversion or transition is known as logophilia, the valorization of the verbal.

Right from the days of Plato and the times of the Greek civilization, the people there dislike the idol or visual image. The other groups that were not image worshippers such as Jews, Muslims and Protestants too were scared by icon phobia. Icon image phobia is the fear for the image, logophilia, icon phobia; Resistance to something new and Parasitism are the four reasons for the secondary status of the films. The written word is turned into a visual image is the logophilia or the valorization of the verbal. Film, being a dominant narrative form of fine art, concentrates on the visual images. Logophilia, on the other hand is mainly concerned with logo, that is, the verbal structure and verbal images. Films are visuals. They consist of visual images. They are now the media of entertainment. It is considered that a film adaptation is a parasite on the tree of a text of literature. It is therefore clear that films are dependent and lower than the works of literature. Films are thought to be dependent because they are visual rather than textual or verbal. Film and literature both are linguistic phenomena.

It is the language of signs which is used by both these fine and composite arts. Both use signifiers to connote a world of signs. The word is a signifier in literature. The frame is the signifier in a film. Both of them are understood through the eye. Robert Burns presents the mental image of a flower and clearly mentions it to be a red red rose flower. In a film, each frame is more informative than 22 the verbal expressions and words in a literary text of a novel. The film provides much more information than the mere ambiguous word. It expresses itself in the frames. Literature expresses itself in words. In a film each frame and each cut gives a multilayered, multi- dimensional and multiple-significance. Shots are juxtaposed to make them come together. This combination of theirs is what the meaning contains. In *The Guns of Navarone* (war film), the long shots, the zoom shots, the montage and the close-ups produce the meaning through images, music, light, close-up and other technical additions. This difference is bound to reflect in both the critical scrutiny and appreciation of both the works of art.

Films are divided into four major classes: -

- 1) Animation films or cartoons
- 2) Parallel cinema of progressive experimental commercial films.
- 3) Fictional or non-fictional documentary film and
- 4) A film that tells a story- a narrative film.

These are the four types in the taxonomy - classification of films. Films like *To Kill a Mocking Bird*, *Tom Jones*, *Great Expectations* and *David Copperfield* are narrative films.

“Within the composition of the frame, the juxtaposition of man and object becomes crucial.” The performance of an actor linked with an object and built upon it will always be one of the most powerful methods of filmic construction.”

We have only to think of Chaplin to see the principle in operation. The dancing rolls in *The Gold Rush*, the supple cane, the globe dance in *The Great Dictator*, the feeding machine in *Modern Times*, the flowers and drinks in *Monsieur Verdoux*, the flea skit in *Limelight*—these are only isolated examples of Chaplin's endless facility for inventing new relationships with objects.” (Bluestone, 23) A film is also capable like a novel of leaping time and space. Therefore, there are the shots of the cinematic juxtaposition of keeping the two different shots side by side, the transition (change), jumps in time and space and (edited) cuts. There are many components of the cinematographic form. The visual emphasis, shifting points of view, lack of depth, the use of montage, specialization of time and space, and the use of the 'camera eye' are used in the modern fiction of the last and the present century too in particular those in which magic realism is a feature as in the novels of Salman Rushdie, Shobha De and Amitav Ghosh. The novels by Don DeLillo illustrate the use of all these cinematographic devices as noticed in *Libra*, 23 *Underworld* and *Falling Man*.

The modern novelists of 20th century have used the 'cinematic technique' is evident in *Lord Jim* by Joseph Conrad. The novelists were naturally excited by the discoveries of the cinema. They attempted to borrow from, and even rival the films in their own medium. This is noticed in the writing of William Golding, Samuel Beckett, John Osborne and Harold Pinter. The adaptation of Tennyson's *Enoch Arden* (1911), Browning's *Pippa Passes* and Jack London's *The Call of the Wild* have attained great cinematic heights in the use of close ups and other cinematic effects. Dickens inspired film editors to use parallel editing; the close ups montage and even dissolves. William Faulkner and Ernest Hemmingway can be considered the other two cinematic writers of the 20 century. The technical shots of modern films such as the close up, the medium shot, the long shot, the crane shot, the moving camera, parallel editing, referential cross cutting, the trolley shot, the zoom color and even sound recording is evident there. Robert Browning, Charles Dickens, the Bronte Sisters, Joseph Conrad, D. H. Lawrence, E. M. Forster are some of the writers who have used those cinematic techniques quite skillfully and successfully. Literature and film differ on account of the fact that literature uses words that is a verbal medium. Film uses the visual medium.

“Differences in the raw materials of novel and film cannot fully explain differences in content. For each medium presupposes a special, though often heterogeneous and overlapping, audience whose demands condition and shape artistic content.” (Bluestone, 31)

In a novel, there is a description. In a film, there are frames, shots, scenes to describe a scene or narrate an event. In film, the use of camera is made to create the celluloid world. The use of camera is made to arrange, to select and to delete in order to bring in prominence and to emphasize the visual presentations. The cinematic world appears more impressive, more effectively emotional, more dramatic, clearer, sharper and more appealing. “The film and the novel remain separate institutions, each achieving its best results by exploring unique and specific properties. At times, the differences tempt one to argue that film-makers ought to abandon adaptations entirely in favor of writing directly for the screen. More often than not, the very prestige and literary charm of the classics has an inhibiting effect, shriveling up the plastic imagination. Like Lot's wife, the film-maker is frequently immobilized in the very act of looking over his shoulder.” (Bluestone, 218)

In a novel and also in a film the element of the story is important. It is the story or idea or the embryonic format which makes the idea grow in a film. Then the seed is planted to grow and the plot is built up by the script writer. Any narrative has three components 1) Statement 2) Substance of the statement and 3) Action that brings out the substance of the statement in a visual presentation.

The frequent use of the three terms such as (a) discourse-a written or spoken presentation is discourse (dialogue in plays and films) description and narration (novel and short stories) and expression (poetry) (b) story- the orderly presentation of episodes bound by a chronological sequence and a cause effect - relationship is called a story and (c) narration is a mode in the discussion of films-the way a text is presented or communicated is narration.

“David Edgar's stage adaptation of Charles Dickens' *Nicholas Nickleby* (1838- 39) for the Royal Shakespeare Company in 1980 has been called "a play about Dickens that critiqued his form of social morality, rather than a straight dramatization of the novel" (Hutcheon, 92)

The dialogue delivery, the gestures and movements of Gabbar Khan (Amjad Khan) in the famous "Kitne Aadmi The?" (How many men were there?) is a memorable scene in the record breaking film *Sholay*. There are many unforgettable cinematic movements in this film such as “Dhanno's nonstop chattering”, “Veeru's suicide drama” and “Ye Haath Mujhe De De Thakur” (Thakur give me these hands of yours) dialogue cum visual presentation. The impact of Russian Formalist is quiet perceptible on the views expressed by Julia Kristeva. The terms like ‘Fabula’ and ‘Synzhet’ are often used by Gerard Genette published in his critical and theatrical treatise on *Discours Du Recit* (Discourse on Discourse (Recit)). Fabula or Fable is the summary of action. ‘Synzhet’ is the design based on arrangement, order, deletion, selection, concentration, time and occurrence. The term "Synzhet" means the scenario of the events to be presented in a film: In both a novel and in a film, the element of point of view is presented. The creator of a novel is the novelist. The creator of a film is its director. The point of view indicates the link between what is being narrated and the creator (novelist-director) who is also the narrator. In a film, the camera lens is the eye of the director-narrator. The director places and moves the camera in whatever manner he likes.

The novelist attempts to present a photographic representation of reality. Though he is skilled in the use of the camera, the director-creator brings actual reality in his visual images and their presentation. The camera being the director's eye functions in various ways- the copier of reality, the commentator, critic of reality, the presenter of reality and the creator of a momentary reality. The camera is used by the director-creator both objectively and subjectively. Deletion of what is not necessary is as important as the selection and ordering of the essential. In both a novel and a film, the novelist and the director quite often present many points of views.

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