



Film and Literature: Some considerations in the area of Visual Discourse and Adaptations

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Abstract

This paper deals with the dynamics of exchange between film and fiction considers the components of graded structured language and the means of communication in a film simultaneously. This interdisciplinary study which moves from the literary to the cinematic, touches the contemporary critical inquiry in vogue-from Structuralism to Deconstruction too. After highlighting the research in the concerned area important issues in the field of adaptations have been raised up. The significance of issues is focused in the light of pedagogical implications by considering effectiveness of adaptation studies in the classroom situations, especially in the literature classes in the typical Indian set up. The article ends up by comparing film and literature and by establishing their correlation which appears to be an enigma to the general public. Out of the various issues the 'visual discourse' and the techniques of discourse analysis has been recommended as a better tool for deciphering the film text.

Full Text

Proposition

The present article is based on the idea that the means of communication in a film—frames, shots, scenes and sequences and the components of its graded structure like word, sentence, paragraph and chapter are at par. If the reader opts for the analysis of a visual discourse, this discourse analysis, in the long run, proves to be a partial clue to the understanding of the film text.

Introduction

This study of the adapted work of the prominent novelists in the in the first decade of 21st century examines both the effectiveness of the film themselves, as films, and the really important consideration of their validity as adaptation of the original works. The analysis will often closely compare the original text, situation, point of view, style and tone, metaphor/symbol/allegory/thought/dream/inner action.

This interdisciplinary study, which moves from the literary to the cinematic, is likely to touch the contemporary critical inquiry in vogue—from structuralism to Deconstruction. It may be noted that the means of communication in a film is in terms of frame, shot, scene and sequence—the components of its graded structure (like word, sentence, paragraph, chapter). It finally leads to an analysis of the film's "Visual Discourse". This discourse analysis, will be into the long run proves to be a partial clue to the in depth understanding of the film. The remaining will depend on the 'Deconstruction' of the text. In that sense the 'novel-film product' conceived by the filmmaker proves to be a 'critique' having its own critical gloss, of the text/the source novel, and not the faithful rendering of the 'original'. The original text, in a way, in this process of adaptation, does not exist. The Director himself becomes a sort of author. The moment a film is conceived in the filmmaker's mind, the author of the novel dies. There is the death of the Author and the Director replaces the author in the process of the adaptation.

Online Research

Research in the field of adaptation studies has been undertaken by different foreign universities in the following areas: 'Approaches to adaptation', 'Aspects of language in literature and Film', 'Textual analysis of selected colonial novels in the light of the narrative perspective, Disclosing Textures and Subtitles about the Novel and Film, Exploring closures in the Novels and the adapted Films', 'Converting an important Subgroup like British Novel Community, Indian English Novels', 'Cinematic aspect of Film Adaptation, Comparison of two cinematic adaptations of War and Peace (Tolstoy)', 'Shift of Meaning in Adaptations', 'The Novel and its relation to the concept of gender role and sexual identity'.

Research in view of cultural and historic value of adaptations has been undertaken in the University of Texas at Austin by Dr. Chiostrì Francesca under the supervision of Ledevere Anre. (UMI) The researcher here has suggested the word 'accommodation' substituting the word 'adaptation'. In the whole, he focuses on equivalent expressive potential of the two media and on the possibility of reconciliation of their linguistic and cultural differences. This redefinition 'adaptation' waves off the possibility of the superiority of the literary to the filmic text and the impossibility to transfer completely the novel's meaning into the film.

Film and fiction share not only the same narrative forms and many story telling strategies but also the same basic appeal. Though a novel and film are closer than play and film in both form and function, to make a movie of novel involves much more in the way of translation. In fact, whatever the similarities between film and fiction and whatever the parallels in their language, to translate a page to screen, word to image, requires a major act of creative imagination and of interpretation as well.

We need to study the films themselves as act of discourse. We need to be sensitive to that discourse and to the force that motivates it. The Dynamics of exchange go both ways between film and fiction. Naturalist Fiction helped cinema develop its interest in neglected subjects and a hard heating style. These in turn affected American hard-boiled novelists like Clain and Hammett, eventually returning to Europe in the Film style of Vinconit, Carne, Clouzot and others.

More and more films are being made and viewed today than ever before because of the proliferation of electronic media. The boom in the video, cable and satellite TV will consistently compel the future film makers to turn to the inexhaustible resources of literature in India for their films. In the emerging situation it becomes imperative that we redefine the new order of relationship between literature and films. The exhaustive treatment of the subject of present project will perhaps provide the basis for identifying these issues:

- a) Should an adaptation consistently mean 'Writer's Film' or 'Literary Film' in opposition to an authentically 'Cinematic Film'?
- b) Are the perceptual bias of images and the conceptual bias of words always incompatible and adverse? Is it possible for the gifted filmmaker to reach out to what the author aspires to?
- c) It is said that the images in film are capable of carrying more of denotation than connotation and hence fall short of the verbal medium when it comes to expressing, for instance, ambiguity, suggestivity, subtle irony, paradox etc. Or is it the other way round?

- d) Film, the argument goes, is tied to the external rather than the internal, unable to pierce through surface to whatever contradictions they might conceal. The visual medium of film, it is said, fail to capture the tension between inner self and social mask that tends to typify in (contemporary) novel.
- e) Are there any real critical distinctions in two media's handling of scenic details?
- f) Do we have to always measure the adaptation by its fidelity to the source?
- g) Is it true that the lesser novels make for fine movies whereas fine novels with greater thematic density and larger human significance and depth of character often make lesser movies?
- h) Are there specific problems encountered by the filmmakers in transposing the verbal to the visual medium in adaptations in regard to the tone, style and point of view?
- i) The 'double register' (image and sound) in film versus the 'single register' in the novel.
- j) Can adaptation studies promote critical interaction and awareness about film, filmmaking and film appreciation amongst the informed and interested cinema aficionados and academia?

These issues were discussed under the Aesthetics of Film Adaptation: Issues and Questions in the International Seminar on Indian literatures and films organized by the Department of English, Kakatiya University, Warangal (Andhra Pradesh) in September 1922.

The present research may help to resolve, to some extent, some of the issues and questions discussed in the international seminar on Indian literatures and films (Sept. 1922) organized by the Department of English, Kakatiya University, Warangal (A.P.) in relation to the *Aesthetics of Film Adaptation: Issues and Questions*.

Considerations in this direction will definitely help to promote a better understanding between literature and film. In the age of Audio-video educational technologies this research may have to contribute to facilitate teaching and learning of language and literature.

Admittedly, many problems remain. Watching some new effects in the movies one may say: "the novel could never do THAT and by reading page or two in any modern novel one may hardly resist the temptation to shout –Oh! ONLY THE NOVEL can do THIS".

The stereophonic or stereoptic possibilities of non-synchronous sound images foreseen since the birth of talkies, often appears to produce responses impossible to achieve in the novel.

Up till now novel and film not only have been studied in their formal interrelationships, they have also raised the question of amalgamation into the genre of 'cinema novel' as opposed to the novelistic scenario of many traditional films.

Modern electronic technology has made video the handmaiden of contemporary society. The televised image has provided millions throughout the world with information, knowledge and entertainment making television one of the most potent socializing processes ever created. Any important event can be broadcast live from any part of the world to a global audience with the help of satellite communication systems.

In the United States there are 100 colleges and universities offering courses in film and television. Nearly a quarter of million college students enroll in cinema or related courses in each academic session. It is estimated that 40000 of these students come to cinema for a brief encounter. They do not intend to be a filmmaker or to be directly involved in the industry; rather they wish to complement their education with an exploration of cinema. More and more students are realizing that knowledge and appreciation of the modern picture arts are essential ingredients of the total enrichment.

The present research project is for film makers, critics, teachers and students of the film. It is also for the fans, whose enthusiasm for star or story may actually be related to deeper sources of satisfaction in the art of film. It is hoped that the general reader of literature would like to cope up with this kind of study, for he/she may then be able to place the art of film in better perspective as part of his/her knowledge of contemporary civilization.

Significance of Issues

It does have certain pedagogical implications. The audio-video medium is quite exciting for the learners. It motivates them considerably and thereby, contributes substantially to the overall process of learning.

Adaptation studies can prove to be very effective in classroom situations, especially in doing literature courses in the typical Indian set up. Geographical locations, atmosphere, religious connotations, customs and traditions are usually, the main hurdles in the proper understanding of any Indian novel. If the teacher, before reading the extracts from the novel, shows the film clippings from the concerned film adaptations, the students would get the feel of those unknown aspects and the cultural contexts could be better understood through the visuals.

Researcher is under the conviction that by making use of images transposed from the novel under the study, the teachers would be in a position to convert the dull black and white page into a colorful image-flow and thereby make the teaching learning activity interesting, lively and fruitful.

Moreover, the efforts in the evaluation of film adaptations would specifically help in the betterment of cinema in general and Indian cinema in particular.

This article would perhaps prove to be a bridge between the established literature and its offspring Cinema in connecting the niceties of both the art forms while establishing the amalgamation and perfect blending of literature into cinema.

The birth and rise of the latest genre of novel entitled 'Cinema Novel' is the testimony of the fact that art of any form is not static. It is reciprocal and complimentary to each other. Literature and cinema while maintaining its individual sanctity have happily married here and the result is the completely new genre entitled, 'CINEMA NOVEL' This demonstrates the ever-increasing impact of cinema on the literature with its forms like Poetry, Drama, and Novel.

Due to the advent of Science and Technology, newer and newer ways of telling stories have come to the limelight, changed norms of narration, visual experimentation in the forms of feelies live 4D,5D and 7D video effects and the latest technique of projection on any surface devoid of screen have totally revolutionized the concept of 'reality'. This new method of projecting reality (simulated real) which appears to be more real than the basic reality (actual real) and which is not removed from the reality (ideal real) but on the contrary perfectly matched with the ideal real and would perhaps bring in the drastic changes in the structure of form and narration. There would be revolution in the established concepts in the field of language and literature only due to the technical advancement in the field of audio and video.

During the span of 1990 to 2000 the post structural narrative diaspora appears to have established with narrative analysis enjoying a life not limited to the confines of literary studies only. Narratologists now carry inquiries into interdisciplinary and post narratological spaces. In addition to the race and sexuality, areas like narrative ethics, the law, history, Information Technology, the holocaust space, the body, film and visual culture has started appearing on the menu card of the renowned narrative journals regularly.

Along with the film, advent of the 'visual culture' counts much. Today, in the narrative Diaspora, newer and newer theories of narratology are waiting in the dark. The amalgamation of the established theories and the newer ideologies in the form of outcome of the advent of Science and Technology from Audio and Video prove

to be a challenging task for the researchers in future. Present research is a step and a spring board in THAT direction.

Cinema and Society

Novel happens to be the most popular literary form today and it shares its popularity with films and TV serials. This raises two issues: One, the future of the novel and two, its relationship. In order to understand these issues it is necessary to examine the relationship between film and novel.

The correlation between film and novel has been quite exciting and considerably challenging to the critics from the cinema as well as literature. In the present century the film seems to have given birth to a set of technical and artistic procedure which has influenced both -the novel as well as the film adaptation.

The appearance of the new medium in the form of the film has sharpened the perception of the creative artists as well as the taker of the novels and films and has totally revolutionized the traditional novelistic presentation. 'Cinema novel' today proves to be the most popular genre of novel. This newly introduced 'Cinema Novel' genre is the outcome of the impact of cinema on the craft of novelistic presentation. Chetan Bhagat is the person who has been using this new form of writing in almost all of his novels.

The past of India is very different from the present in which we are breathing. In early years of cinema various problems like finance, choice of actress/actors, locations and so on were barriers for which cinema has gone through dawn phase. With the advancements and up gradation by media, cinema has shown a great improvement which gives chances to many creative filmmakers to put forward their new and interesting ideas. Today, cinema is picking up fresh and advanced ideas that were not accepted in the past Indian Society. Here media plays a vital role in exchange of ideas and views between countries and masses. Our society is accepting and enjoying these innovative idea and welcome the new era cinema with open arms.

As for instance , movies like 'Bhag Milka Bhag'; 'Vicky donor', 'Barfi', 'Lunch box', 'Bombay talkis' are few examples where new generation filmmakers have tried to make efforts to present different yet realistic view. Cinema is considered to mould ideas, opinions and an effective medium to educate. It can also be used for the growth of international understanding. Since its beginning with the film 'Raja Harishchandra' (1913), the cinema has remained to be the most powerful media for mass communication in India. Cinema has the ability to combine entertainment with communication of ideas. It has the potential appeal for its audience. It certainly leaves other media far behind in making such an appeal.

Like literature cinema has produced much which touches the innermost layers of the man. It mirrors the episodes in such manner that leaves an impact on the coming generations. Cinema presents an image of the society in which it is born and the hopes, aspirations, frustration and contradictions present in any given social order.

The main motto behind making film is to connect people from different sections of the society in one common theme. India being one of the largest movie producing country and due to its wide acceptance, Hindi movies can be easily used to portray India's art and culture. Hindi movies are possibly the best source of entertainment as most of the country's population watches Hindi movies; hence it generates revenues for better economic growth. Cinema is also considered to be an excellent source of refreshment for stress. As a matter of fact, the movies depict that good always wins over evil.

Films are cultural artifacts created by specific culture, which reflect those cultures, and in turn, affect them. Film is considered to be an important art form, a source of popular entertainment and a powerful method for educating or indoctrinating citizens.

Amitabh Bachan well said, "Indian cinema has virtually become a parallel culture. Talk of India with a foreigner and debate virtually centers on Indian films"

In nutshell, cinema has an impact on the society where people relate themselves with live characters of big screen.

Film and literature

Literature and film are co-related. Generally people think of literature as a sacred subject- as something serious and academic, super annuated, well established thing with grammar of its own. Film on the other hand has taken birth after the birth of literature and is generally not thought to be on par with literature. But this is a wrong notion about film. Richard Dyer Mac Cann makes a point when he says:

If you ask me to give you the most distinctive quality of good writing, I would give it to you in this one word: VISUAL. Reduce the art of writing to its fundamentals and you come to this single aim: to convey images by means of words. But to convey images. To make the mind to see project on to that inner screen of the brain a moving picture of objects and events, events and objects moving towards a balance and reconciliation of a more than usual state of emotion with more than usual order. That is definition of good literature- of achievement of every good poet- from Homer and Shakespeare to James Joyce or Earnest Hemingway. It is also a definition of ideal film. (Richard Dyer Mac Cann, 1966)

There is direct need of the time that the ideas about the structural differences between literature and film, and need the process of adaptation must undergo serious revision. Lot many prejudices about film are in existence and there are everyday-changes in the technicalities of film making including the nature of film and revolution in the film itself. A very balanced position has been opted for by the authority in the field of fiction into film thus:

Perhaps the most praising reason for rethinking these issues (the process of adaptation and changes in the nature and situation of film) and reconsidering this curiously controversial form lies in the essential absurdity of seeing film and literature as mortal enemies. Indeed when the din and dust of the battle die down, when the bias toward print is removed and the need to assert cinema's uniqueness quelled, what becomes manifest is something quite the opposite: that far from being literatures antagonist, film is, in a very real sense, a form of literature itself Not simply sharing the very qualities that make literature, but making for a system of narration that unites the power of images they aim to create, it might even be considered a natural next step in literatures evolution-a form that Flaubert Dickens and other writers had somehow envisioned in their minds eye and, through Griffith, Eisenstein, and other filmmakers, actually helped to create. (Boyum: 1985: P20)

Conclusion

The issues considered above and the discussion of certain salient issues bring in the importance of the 'visual discourse' in the discourse analysis of any film text and this discourse analysis, in the long run, proves to be a better tool for deciphering the film text.

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