



Research Paper

Digging the Third Eye in Literature: An Adaptation of To Kill a Mockingbird

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ABSTRACT: Literature which is encoded by the written word, is all about stories and characters. The bonding between literature and film is the best way to tell stories. Adaptation is not an imitation but a creative art. The movie 'To kill a Mockingbird' is a perfect epitome of this statement. The film portrays the basic essence of novel, properly. Mulligan not only relocated and translated the elements of novel but also enriched the filmic version with new utterances and unique creativities.

KEYWORDS: Adaptation, film, racism, rigid framework, literary fidelity

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I. INTRODUCTION

Literature which is encoded by the written word is all about stories and characters. The bonding between literature and film is the best way to tell stories. However, the relationship between the word and the image continues to evolve as we enter into new and varied relationships with our multiple, intertwined and increasingly independent media. This offers ample scope for a comparative examination of movies and literature in order to discern how the two have continued to modify one another during the past century.

The character and substance of literature and film are usually in conflict. There is little doubt even in contemporary era when films enjoy a high artistic, cultural and popular profile that the combination of literature and movies is an unholy alliance. There is something that makes the two separate art forms unique. One form uses words to tell a story and the other uses images are not minor differences. Plenty of movies have actually been based on novels, and yet are works apart and independent of their source material. Moving images imprint certain inererasable elements in a spectator's mind and captures the complete attention to the viewers.

Adaptation is not an imitation but a creative art. The movie To Kill a Mockingbird is a perfect epitome of this statement. Harper Lee's autobiographical novel marked a striking debut by a promising writer. Day by day, with the advent of modern technology, literature gains myriad and novel dimensions through films, the representative art of 21st century.

Harper Lee published her debut novel, To Kill a Mockingbird, in 1960 after a two year period of revising and rewriting. The book was made into a successful movie in 1962 directed by Robert Mulligan, starring Gregory Peck as Atticus, Mary Badham, Philip Alford, Robert Duvall and Brock Peters. 'She made the mockingbird sing forever', published 'The Hindu', commemorating Harper Lee and her seminal art. The novel in particular contains lessons in human dignity and respect for people, which are fundamental and universal.

The trope of adaptation suggests that just as any literary text can generate infinite readings, so any novel can produce umpteen adaptations. Filmic adaptations of novels invariably superimpose a double set of generic conventions, one drawn from the generic intertexture of the source novel itself and the other consisting of those genres engaged by the translating medium of film. The intertextuality of cinema is multitasking. Adaptation consists of amplifying the source text through these multiple intertexts. Adaptation is not just the relocation and repetition of sublime ideas but also the stimulation of new utterances and creativity. Adaptation can also be transposition which includes offering commentary on a source text.

This present analysis discerns various layers of adaptation theory. It is difficult to turn a novel into a film. The film and the novel have many similarities and some disparities. Ideally, a novel and its film version complements each other, as in this case. A film can accomplish elements that novels can't and vice versa. Likewise, film has limitations that a novel doesn't. By its nature, film is a visual medium, which makes a first person story difficult to tell. To have Scout narrating throughout the film as she does in the book would have become digressing, so Scout as narrator sets the mood of the scenes in the film. So there is no depiction of Scout

as first person narrator in the movie as in the book. In the movie, there is childlike perception presented flawlessly.

The film uses music to reinforce the child's perspective. The film has Scout as an important character but it also expands on her brother, Jem's personality too like Jem finds the whole things in the tree, he accompanies Atticus to inform Helen about her husband's demise and he was also left to solely nurse her sister which is absent in the book. A film has a rigid structure and therefore, it concentrates on certain characters unlike books. For instance, Miss Stephanie Crawford and Cecil Jacob's, not Francis Hancock, compels Scout to break her promise to Atticus regarding combat. Aunt Alexandra is not mentioned in the movie at all, so the question of Scout behaving like a lady was removed. Here, the gender bias and prejudices which was obvious in the novel was kept less relevant or mild by the film makers.

For the sake of explicit narration, films introduce new characters and expand existing ones. In the film, the heartfelt conversation between Scout and Jem details her persona whereas the novel had a single paragraph devoted to her. Viewers also see Tom Robinson's father and children in the movie, father Robinson is absent in the book and his kids are a passing reference only. Many people enjoy the advantage of being able to visualise a character, however, viewers can be thrown out of the story if the actor playing the part doesn't fit the reader's vision of the character. For instance, the actress who plays Maudie is thin, much younger, and more conventional than the one in book. On the other hand, Gregory Peck, by Lee's own assertion, is the perfect embodiment of Atticus Finch, which gives the character a far greater depth than the book.

There are many striking similarities between the film and the novel, *To Kill a Mockingbird*. Both the versions presented the flashback narration by the old Scout. The macabre life of Boo Radley was portrayed bereft any omissions or additions. All the relevant actions and conundrums unraveled in the novel were presented with authenticity. The trials and tribulations encountered by Tom Robinson, racism and its brutal facets, white supremacy, racial prejudices all are portrayed in an infallible manner. The novel as well as the film reveals the stark realities to humorous pleasing moments brilliantly.

Certain sequences were avoided to adhere to the time and space limits of movie such as the children's school and classroom shots, church scene etc. These are irrelevant but the truncated depiction of Calpurnia, the maid in Atticus household was unfair as Calpurnia was the motherly figure for Scout and Jim. We can't blatantly upbraid the director for these minute omissions as the novel is not bounded to time but the film is. Lee's novel is a coming-of-age story influenced by a major event in the community and within one family. The film is a courtroom drama that happens to include something about the lead attorney's home life.

The implied incest between Bob and Mayella Ewell is never discussed during the course of the trial. The movie never displays the realities behind Maycomb's caste system and the viewers remain oblivious to the fact that Ewells are considered to be trash. These eliminations may have done to avoid the actions of fanatics and conservatives. The courtroom scenes are condensed in the film. Gregory Peck as Atticus Finch delivers a shortened version of Atticus arguing to the jury. The lines he does say are verbatim, but several points from the speech are excluded. Neither does the film explore the aftermath of the trial or exhibits the conversations, Atticus has with his children, aids them to comprehend the situation. The film addresses the heart-wrenching plight of the African-Americans only through the trial. Calpurnia was treated with dignity as the Finch family is a progressive one.

The mockingbird is an innocuous creature which only sings to bring music to the garden. The sin of killing the bird is evident, but it is a metaphor for inculcating and avenging innoxious minorities. There are two characters who are in semblance with the bird, ie, the black, Tom Robinson and the outcast among the whites, Boo Radley. This symbolic usage of mockingbird is infallible in both the versions, ie, filmic as well as written.

A long episodic novel can easily lose its way; but Lee has an unequivocal organic sense of a single story with a unifying theme of *Mockingbird*. The first part of the novel which is an account of Scout's early years, primarily in search of comprehending the mystery of Boo Radley was perfectly adapted into the visual medium. Both the director and the novelist successfully, brought the two conflicting narratives together.

To Kill a Mockingbird is a film in which there is a great interplay of past and present, justice and injustice, innocence and experience, progress and tradition, old people and young people, male and female characteristics and so on. There are certain irrelevant scenes which were avoided by the creators of the movie in order to meet the financial and technical requirements. Unlike film, the novel has no rigid framework and authors have taken full advantage of this freedom and represent the life with its entirety. But in film the makers should confront various conundrums and troubles to bring the story to the screen.

The novel and the film have many similarities and a few differences. But we can claim that these minute alterations never mitigated the beauty of the novel while adapting to the film. In general, the film is a faithful adaptation of the book with only a few subtle changes most of which were forced upon Mulligan by time constraints and the voice over narration which smoothes over the cracks left by material deleted from the book.

Adaptation is a form of criticism, recreation as well as translation. Changes in adaptation are essential and practically unavoidable, mandated by the restraints of time, space and medium. But the question is how much and what are edited. The omissions of unnecessary digressions is acceptable whereas the essence of the source being tampered for social acceptance and box office collection is unpardonable.

The change of medium facilitates an adaptation to be automatically different and original. The shift from a single-track verbal medium to a multi-track medium like animation can play not only with words but also with music, sound effects and moving images, explains the undesirability of literary fidelity. The film is very much reflective of the original audience's culture. As the film ages, audiences need more information to fully grasp the story. The fact that the film version is powerful is a testament to the fine adaptation of a classic story.

The film portrays the basic essence of novel, properly. Robert Mulligan not only relocated and translated the elements of novel but also enriched the filmic version with new utterances and unique creativities. The minutest eliminations and additions are essential to augment the beauty of the film. It is mandated that a film should not lose the essence underpinning the source work. The notion of racism, patriarchy, foisting nature of power prevalent in the so-called sophisticated American society and even the atmosphere of the novel was flawlessly imaged in the film, bounding to the film's time limits and rigid framework.

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