

Relevance of Two Art Forms—Literature and Films

Literature like the other arts such as painting, music, dance, cinema etc. is an expression of individual thought and feeling achieved through the creative process. Artists seek to share their experiences, observations and understanding through the medium that most effectively lends itself to their personal skills and abilities. Whether the artists are writing stories, drawing pictures, writing music, composing a photograph or creating a film, they are expressing their relationship to the world round them at that moment. Their works share certain expressive elements such as structure, theme and tone. Art connects human beings to each other in that it allows us to share each other's perceptions, emotions and experiences. A gifted artist may capture creatively what we feel but cannot express ourselves. Literature is the imitation of an action by language. When a writer takes great care to describe a mis-en-scene or to articulate an abstraction, it is an art as opposed to "commodity", a distinction first explored in Elizabethan times.

Literature and the other fine arts are all similar in that they are specific media through which one gives expression to what is in the soul. All the fine arts attempt to solidify, communicate and embellish thoughts and communicate in a manner that transcends all others. It is a method by which creativity happens and human nature can be reflected. They are connected as they require someone with a point of view to create from a particular perspective. They are similar because they have the ability to elicit a response from those who experience the creation.

Literature can help to inspire other mediums of artistic expression. Challenging and powerful literature can set the stage for amazing, powerful and compelling representation in other art forms. There was times when literature cannot be replicated into other mediums. The relationship between literature and other arts is that they can both be used to articulate experiences within the human predicament. All the arts are a response to the culture and events of particular time periods. All the arts

namely literature, painting, music, photography, cinema and many other forms of arts such as Dance and sculpture are all independent mediums of expression that evolve understanding, thoughts and emotions. Each one of these can exist independent of others but frequently more than one medium of art are combined to produce much better result than what would have been possible by sum of effect of each one by itself. Because of the advancement of science and technology, all the arts are linked and influenced by one another.

Literature is considered one of the five fine arts. Among them, Cinema is the youngest art form. When any literary work is inspired and made into movies, it is called adaptation. Linda Hutcheon observes that adaptations are everywhere today; on the television and movie screen, on the musical and dramatic stage, on the internet, in novels and comic books, in your nearest theme park and video arcade. Adaptation, i.e. text to screen, is virtually as old as Cinema itself. But while adapting literary work into a film, which itself is a creative process, it takes so many things to make or break the success and popularity of the original literary work and vice-versa. There was a time when Cinema was looked down upon a low form of mechanical reproduction of reality. However, matters have changed over the years, with masters of the medium creating masterpieces on celluloid, thus helping to break prejudices and broaden the critical vision. Today cinema is a unique art with room to incorporate other art forms like music, dance, painting and literature.

The visual dimension of film has associations with painting; its dependence on movement links it with dance and its ability to produce kinetic and emotive effects equate it with music. As it involves the performance of artists and need spectators, its relation is explicit. Above all, film as an art has close relation to literature in its use of plot, characters, setting, imagery and dialogue, its strategies of expression and its tendency to manipulate space and time. Thus, the relationship between film and literature remains surprisingly long, interesting and complicated.

As soon as cinema began to see itself as a narrative entertainment, the idea of adapting a literary work for film received currency. According to Macfarlane, the reason for this tendency was “the lure of a pre told title, the expectation that respectability or popularity achieved in one medium might infect the work created in another.” (Macfarlane, 1996:7) Literary adaptations have pedagogical value in teaching a nation about its classes and its literary heritage. For more than ninety years, the process of adaptation has attracted critical attention than any other film related issues. Julie Sanders in ‘Adaptation and Appropriation’ defines adaptation as “specific process involving the transition from one genre to another; novels into film; drama into musical;

dramatization of prose narrative and prose fiction; or the inverse movement of making drama into prose narrative.” (Julie Sander, 2005:27)

Both films and fiction have always been related. Both of them are narrative form and are referential. Fiction and film produce stories that offer to pre-existent materials. Fiction uses words and film uses images. Fiction refers to language and films refer to the world of images recorded by the cameras. The most significant common feature of them is that the words and the images they use suggest different meanings for readers or viewers. Fiction uses narrative language to depict consciousness but the camera does not have illustrative thoughts. Therefore, although both of them apply dialogues, attitudes and feeling through their narrative language, we observe that book becomes more ambiguous and elusive when it is employed by images. As films mostly rely on images, visual gestures and expressions, they limit the complexity of fiction. Though films may apply different techniques such as voice over, cutting or tracking, it is hard for them to imitate the complex language and the feeling of books through the cameras. The camera cannot achieve being the omniscient narrator of the nineteenth century and it cannot reproduce a subjective stream of consciousness narrative.

Both films and novels have different point of view. In film where the camera is placed before shooting is the exact point of view of the narrator. Whatever can be told in print in a novel can be approximately told or pictured in film. Fiction is a verbal expression of the novelist and it turns on your imagination. Film is a verbal and audio visual expression of the imagination of the director. Fiction is a linguistic narration and film is a pictorial narration. Film operates in real time hence it is more limited. Novels end only when they feel like it. But, it is not possible for film to reproduce completely the thoroughness with which novel tells a story. Film cannot have the quality of Saga which novel has, except when a film is a serial. In a novel, the dramatic action of the story is told inside the head of the main character from whose point of view the story is told. The reader knows his thoughts, feelings, memories, hopes and fears. In film, the story is told in pictures, dialogue and description placed within the context of dramatic structure.

Fiction is a work of an author, a single author. Film is also the work of an author or auteur. But it is also a group production, an art which is not entirely the product of a single artist. It is collaborative effort in the person of the film director. Moreover, Film is a machine art, depending on mechanical equipment for both its creation and exhibition and it relies on illusion, on our acceptance that pictures are moving when of course they are not. Film is not an art but also a recording medium like print. It can record music, drama, ballet, operas, painting, sculpture or any other art. The

narrative technique of film has a lot in common and has its strongest bond with novel and not with drama and painting. Both novel and film tell long stories from the point of view of a narrator with a great wealth of detail. Whatever can be told in print in the novel can be more or less clearly pictured or told in film. Novels can be very long. Film is costly to produce. Distribution and servicing also pose a lot of problems placing obvious limits to its length. Film is often restricted to what Shakespeare called “the short two hours traffic of our stage”. Commercial film still cannot produce the range of the novel in time. A novel may be thousand pages or more. An average screen play is 125 to 150 pages. Films cannot attempt to portray the wealth of detail that the novel contains. The TV serial can overcome this deficiency. Besides this, the novel can by brief references bring in a wealth of detail by way of background information, film has to show most of it by picturization or has to resort the subtitles.

Although film has a shorter duration, it has certain advantages flowing out of visualization. Everything is narrated through pictures and aided with dialogue, effects and music. Because of this, even illiterate persons can enjoy a film to a great extent, while they are unable to read a novel by themselves. Each film may hold within it thousands upon thousands of details of information. Even an experienced person cannot grasp all these details of information in one viewing. Each time we view the film, fresh details may be noticed and their significations understood. No novelist can describe every detail in every frame in the process of writing the same story in novel form. The novelist stimulates the imagination of the reader to imagine a lot more than what is explicitly described in the novel about places, persons and events. But film also gives ample scope for the imagination of the viewer and each time one views a film, different details may be observed in each frame by the viewer. The viewer can exercise his choice to determine what to focus on and what to imagine about when he sees the film. Moreover, every reader may not have the same kind of faculty of imagination.

In novel the tension of narrating arises out of the need to use words and words only, to tell story, character, setting, theme and so forth and the narration of it in words from the point of view of the narrator. In film, the driving tension is on the other hand between the materials of the story and the objective nature of the image through which the story has to be told. Sometimes an image can get you confused which is true in the case of flash back or dream. But it is said that flash back should be used when the narration cannot be carried on without it. Similarly intercutting between scenes can also create confusion. It happens because the image on the screen has no tense. The filmmaker has to express thoughts through images. According to Monaco, “The words on the page are always the same but the image on the screen changes continually as we

direct our attention. Film is in this way a much richer experience.” (Monaco, 2009:30) But sometimes some of the conventions of novels’ narrative are very difficult for film to access first person narrative and stream of consciousness technique.

Both film and literature are linguistic phenomena, being found on the basic concept of sign. Both use signifiers to connote a world of meanings, the signified. The word and the frame, the signifiers in literature and film respectively are both visual as they are both perceived with the eye. When a word is read, it refers to or creates a mental image or concept that signifies meaning. When a frame is watched, the effect is immediate here the image that signifies meaning is not mental but directly presented to the eye. Thus, it might be said that the filmmaker’s task is easier. It could also in sense narrow the scope of the medium if the signifier in the medium was too explicit to unravel the possibilities of the signified. However, it is argued that a cinematic frame can provide far more information than the more ambiguous word. A film speaks through its frames just as literature through words. Besides, in film each angle, each cut, could make multiple significations. Juxtaposing shots make them collide and it is from the collision that meaning is produced. The meaning produced through montage is further enriched by devices like music and acting. Verbal signs work conceptually whereas cinematic signs work directly, sensually and perpetually. As a visual medium, film employs a multiplicity to techniques like point of view, story and plot, flash back, references forward, Light and shade, costume, the setting or the place, the performance of actors, colour, cinematography (camera), shot, sound track etc.

Thus, we can arrive at a conclusion that film is collaborative art and it has immense story telling powers. It enriches and enhances the story in the novel through its own new and rich experience and repertoire. Novels and films are valuable but both are different. But it is not easy to say which is better because what seems better to one person may be worst for another person. It is nothing but an individual points of view or perception which makes book or film better or worse.

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