



FROM SCREEN TO STAGE: APPROACHING ADAPTATION

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Abstract

Plays and films constitute two spectacular fields of entertainment in human history. The idea and understanding of terms such as 'adaptations' itself is the product of curiosity for new experiments.

As we know, in a drama- the actor is the author. He can-almost control his performance through his way of acting. But in the film the director is the dictator. He can control everything, can refine every scene through retakes, cuts, dubbing and editing. So film is the art of the director while the success of a drama depends on its actors to a great extent. Drama is performed in a confined manner. But film has more scope and possibilities in this case. Different locations can be manipulated, at the same time, the effect of the original should not be altered. Available time for performance, make ups, characters, retakes to make the scene perfect, technology etc. adds advantage to film.

The researcher has gone through various issues involved in screen to stage adaptation. There are other factors that make adapting films a difficult task. One of those factors is the static point of view of the theatre spectator. A drama performance is a three dimensional ephemeral programmed of events, while a film is, most often only two dimensional, unlike drama, it is a permanent visual record of performance .Drama is aimed at live audience, but for film there is no immediate physical relationship between the actors and viewers. In a film director through camera decides what should be seen by the viewers- but in drama, except in some rare cases, there is no narrator. In drama the audience chooses what to watch. Watching a drama is a group experience while watching a film can be individual experience, especially when one watch movie alone. In film, intermissions are less; scene changes take place quickly, through cuts and editing process. But in drama scene changes and costume changes takes a lot of time.

Keywords: Adaptation, screen, stage, spectator, performance, actor, author, character

INTRODUCTION

Plays and films constitute two spectacular fields of entertainment in human history. The idea and understanding of terms such as 'adaptation' itself is the product of curiosity for new experiments. It was not only the curiosity but also the possibilities of emerging technology and



innovations which have contributed to adaptations-both stage to screen adaptations and vice versa. Looking at various types of adaptations which include cinemas- novel to screen adaptation has been the most popular one. There are remarkable theoretical and literary studies on screen to stage adaptation bringing into focus the present context.

“ To act, to do, to perform” is a line from Hamlet’s grave digger. It is a basis for an inquiry into how is action constituted by language, materiality and performance. Where there is no enough preparation and rehearsal before a drama staged a range of difficult issues in drama- such as a discord in the relationship between object and process text and performance, structure and play, becomes apparent. But the same drama is adapted in to a film; there are more possibilities for a better performance. As we know, in a drama- the actor is the author. He can-almost control his performance through his way of acting. But in the film the director is the dictator. He can control everything, can refine every scene through retakes, cuts, dubbing and editing. So film is the art of the director while the success of a drama depends on its actors to a great extent. When we discuss the topic in detail, drama is performed in a confined manner. But film has more scope and possibilities in this case. Different locations, places etc. can be manipulated at the same time, the effect of the original should not be altered. Available time for performance, make ups, characters, retakes to make the scene perfect; use of technology etc. adds advantage to film. .

Before the rise of movies in Europe, several playwrights composed plays which were the major entertainment of common People. With the passage of time, the movies began to dominate in the entertainment sector. But, unlike movies, the dramatic literature written which is meant to be performed on stage, entertained its readers too. A theatre adaptation, usually, is the transfer of a literary narrative work, in whole or in part, to a play. It is the common form of theatre adaptation but now day’s films also have been adapted into theatre. Some of the famous examples are *Little Shop of Horrors (1982) a musical drama composed by Mencon*, *Passion by Stephen Sondheim etc* In India, there is an excellent example by the famous director Meera Nair. She adapted her own super hit movie *Monsoon Wedding (2001)* into a musical adaptation under the same title. In Malayalam, *Mathilukal (1989)* by Adoor Gopala Krishnan has been adapted into theatre by Promod Payyannur starred by Gopakumar and Sajitha Madathil. Other works adapted into theatre include non-fiction (including journalism), autobiography, comic books, scriptures, historical sources, and even other plays. Film adaptation usually transfers either a written work or a drama. There is innumerable example for both the kind. There are not only film versions of most of Shakespeare's works but also multiple versions of many of the plays. Many spinoffs adapted Shakespeare's plays very loosely (such as *West Side Story*, *Kiss Me Kate*, *The Lion King*, *O*, and *10 Things I Hate about You*). Adaptations in languages other than English flourish all over the world, such as Akira Kurosawa's two epic films *Throne of Blood (1957)* and *Ran (1985)*, and Eric Rohmer's *Conte D'Hiver (A Tale of Winter, 1992)*. Similarly, Broadway plays are frequently adapted, either from musicals or from dramas. On the one hand, theatrical adaptation does not involve as many interpolations or elisions as novel adaptation, but on the other, the demands of



scenery and possibilities of motion frequently entail changes from one medium to the other. Sometimes, the adaptive process can continue after one translation. Mel Brooks' *The Producers* was a film that was adapted into a Broadway musical and then adapted again into a film. Due to the different characteristics of stage and screen performances, adapting plays for the cinema and back poses many theoretical as well as technical problems. The most obvious evidence of this fact is the complaints about unsuccessful adaptations. Here are some of the problems concerning the adaptations of films for the theatre and vice versa.

It is true that the length of a stage play and a film are almost the same today (accept the first few silent films, which lasted no more than twenty to thirty minutes) but there are other factors that make adapting films a difficult task. One of those factors is the static point of view of the theatre spectator. A drama performance is a three dimensional ephemeral programmed of events, while a film is, most often only two dimensional, unlike drama, it is a permanent visual record of performance .Drama is aimed at live audience, but for film there is no immediate physical relationship between the actors and viewers. They are relatively passive. Film has a narrator that is camera, director through camera decides what should be seen by the viewers- but in drama, except in some rare cases, there is no narrator. In drama the audience chooses what to watch. Drama is more a verbal art with some visual components but film is a visual art with some dramatic components. Watching a drama is a group experience while watching a film can be individual experience, especially when one watch movie alone. In film, intermissions are less; scene changes take place quickly, through cuts and editing process. While in drama scene changes and costume changes takes a lot of time...

Take a film; it is reducible to a DVD. We can enjoy a film fully remaining home. But drama is essentially a theatrical art, can never be enjoyed fully in a recorded form. The particle suggested by film is then rather than therefore, it gives primacy to succession than causality, while in a drama, usually consequences are given primacy. So the film director is almost compelled to move the camera, and use different dimensions and distances; otherwise, the film would make a dull, "theatrical" impression. Most often, especially in the case of classic or celebrated plays, too great a reverence for the literary material has proved to be a failure as dull and heavily theatrical film. Moreover, on screen there is a need to visualize every detail of the setting. In a play, the stage directions may speak of "chairs and benches" to represent an opera house and the audience will be willing and so able to imagine an eighteenth-century theatre. In a film, the director would either need a real place or a studio set, because the cinematic conventions would not allow him a bare, symbolic representation of it.

Furthermore, the film medium requires a fundamental transition to an elaborated visual effects and a much greater economy on the textual level. Thus, the text of the drama often has to be reduced in amount as well as in expressiveness. The result is a gap that must be filled with visual means of expression; it is not at all sufficient to concretize the setting. It is here that many adaptations fail to convey the play's essence due to a slavish fidelity to the dramatic text. A good screenwriter should not hesitate to reduce a long monologue to one fierce look, or a dialogue to



an emotional gesture, if the conveyed message remains unchanged. A very good example of this technique is the final scene of Act I of Amadeus. On stage, Saltier recites a long monologue in which he curses God and makes an oath to destroy Mozart. In the film, his speech is short, but while he is swearing revenge, he looks up at the wooden cross, then takes it off, and throws it into the fireplace where it lies burning brightly. This is a powerful image, and it manages to replace the original monologue more than adequately. In other cases, it is often difficult to convey the thoughts or feelings of the characters without words, using only visual means of expression. But after all, this difficulty is a challenge for the ambitious screenwriter or director and therein lays the special attraction of film adaptations. Commercial films are often adapted according to the current taste of the mass audience. For example, many early films had to have a happy ending or could not show nudity. Today, special effects and action scenes are often expected. Of course, this does not apply to all adaptations, but it is the general tendency of commercial cinema.

When we apply the principle of psychological distance, we will recognize that there is a strong sense of reality in audience reaction to film, but the fact is that the pictures on the screen is two dimensional images and so, removed a stage from actual contact with the spectators. The fact is that when a living man is set before actor-actor before spectator- a certain deliberate conventionalizing is demanded of the former if the aesthetic dimension is not to be lost. While in the film in which a measure of distance is imposed between image and viewer, even though these have to exist alongside possibilities and symbols far removed from the world around us. This is the paradox of cinema. In drama we can see codified manner of presentation. But in film, being expected as realistic- there should be natural way of presentation-in scenes, locations, performance, dialogues etc. Both the media have their own 'Mis-en-scene' (way of language) (style) to be followed

George Bernard Shaw observed that, the cinema cannot outst plays. It can of course take the skeletons of Macbeth or Iris or the Admirable Crinchtton, and make very entertaining films of them with Shakespeare, Pinero and Barrie left out and a good deed of photographed natural scenery bunged in. But these films are not substitutes for the plays. According to Bert Cardullo (Stage and Screen Adaptation Theory; From 1916 to2000). The many contrasts between film and theatre may be grouped along the old Aristotelian lines of audience and thing created. The question of who is the creator of a play or film has engaged number commentators. In drama it is playwright, in film it is director. We are told at least by the fashionable auteur film critics and yet the proposition is far from conclusive.

CONCLUSION

Films and plays have always been the centre of attraction among visual arts. Like all other visual arts films and plays has been engaged in expressing different what they want to say through visual media. Plays except closet dramas are meant to be performed on stage. But most of it possess fine literature, say, William Shakespeare, chief figure of not only English drama, but of



the English literature itself. Dramas always come up discussing on some social issues, and some notable plays even brought about changes in the society. When one wants to stage a drama - which belongs to English literature – the script is already available. But the troop has to work on it for a while to make it a perfect one.

Most often, it is the successful films which are adapted in to plays. When a film is to be adapted to stage, there is more than one challenge the crew has to face, from the script writer, the director, to the actor. The challenge starts from the screen play. The script writer should remove the possibility of confusion between the two. Within this field lies the possibility of an artistic expression equally or more powerful as that of the screen. The distinction is determined by the audience reactions to the one and to the other. On the theatre the spectators are face to face by characters, which it successfully delineated always possess a quality which renders them greater than individuals while in films the real time and real space are banished. The world we move in may be thus removed from the world ordinarily about us. It is expected that this type of studies will ring to light the struggles involved in screen to stage adaptation and vice versa. There has been conducted many studies on the topic by many scholars but there is a need of more studies to drag out some more interesting findings on the topic. Through this it is mainly aimed to reflect the issues involved in the process of the types of adaptation mentioned earlier.

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