

Comparing the Cinematic Representation and Novel of Ernest Hemingway's *The Old Man and the Sea*

Navdeep Kaur, Dipna
Ph. D. Scholars at
SGGSWU, India

Abstract

Film Adaptation is the transformation of a written work into a film. It is recognized as a type of derivative work. Whether remaining strictly to the source material or interpreting concepts derived from the original work. Adaptations are necessarily an extension or interpretation of the original story. When referring to adaptation, working with source material and producing or directing a film based on a work of literature will be looked upon. The present paper will analyze adaptation within the film using Ernest Hemingway's *The Old Man and the Sea* (1952) and will discuss the movie *The Old Man and the Sea* by John Sturges (1958) for the interpretation of source material through alternative cinema.

Keywords- *Film, Adaptation, Cinematic Representation, Language, Flashbacks, Remembrance*

Introduction

Adaptation, by its very nature involves a process of change and modification in order to suit a new or different purpose. It is the translation from one medium i.e. prose into another medium i.e. film. The differences between a film and the literary work are apparent as the two media are marked by such different traits that they belong to two separate artistic genres. Film is a visual medium, there are several qualities and characteristics that work specifically well for storytelling whereas the novels follow a linguistic medium that focuses heavily on the use of words and imagination that the reader has to fill in themselves.

The major difference between film and books is that the visual images stimulate our perception directly and reading a word requires a mental translation that viewing a picture does not. Film is a more direct sensory experience than reading. Besides verbal language, there is a color, movement and sound. The filmmaker can refashion the spirit of the story with his or her own vision and tools. As always, there are some ways in which the book differs from the film as well as the facts

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they have several things in common. Adaptations cannot stand alone, it is necessary to understand the novel first to understand the film.

The present study will focus on some complementary analyses including assessment of adaptation that how one writes an adaptation, interprets the source material and the way directors have adapted the literary works to create the original films. Another analysis will deal with how the film directors use adaptation to create new works that stand a bit apart from the original written material, but operate as an extension of the original source. As James. M. Welsh and Peter Lov state in the opening of *The Literature: Film Reader: Issues in Adaptation*:

After a century of cinema, movies have changed substantially, both technologically and stylistically, but after a hundred years, mainstream cinema is still telling and retelling stories, and most of these stories are still being(or have been) appropriated from literary or dramatic sources, as much as 85 percent by some calculations and accounts. Adaptations have always been central to the process of filmmaking since almost the beginning and could well maintain its dominance into the cinema's second century¹.

The current paper though deals with different domains of cinematic representation yet the original source is taken from Ernest Hemingway's novel *The Old Man and the Sea*. Hemingway was born in Oak park, Illinois in 1899. He spent much of his time in his early days roaming about in the woods, or rowing out across the water of a large lake in quest of big fishes. In 1952, he brought *The Old Man and the Sea*, a tale of the struggle of a single, old fisherman against the powers of fate and the ocean. With this literary work, a parable of man against nature, Hemingway recaptured which was recognized in the award of the Nobel Prize in literature.

Hemingway writes of what he knows, from his own experiences. His literary output is not much massive but he found time to write even that much in a life full packed: full of shooting, big game hunting, fishing, fighting and about as much as the human body can take. In his other literary works also that include *The Sun also Rises*, *A Farewell to Arms*, *For Whom The Bell Tolls*, the ideal Hemingway character understands the need for acting gracefully under pressure and at the risk of defeat at the hands either of society or nature.

The Old Man and the Sea is a parable of man's struggle with the natural world, of his noble courage and endurance tells of the Cuban fisherman Santiago who for eighty four, luckless days has rowed his skiff into the Gulf Stream in quest of fish, Atlantic blue Marlin. At first , he was

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accompanied by a boy, Manolin with whom he talked of better days and about the great sport of baseball, but he was alone during the period of struggle with the great fish in the sea. Aged and solitary, he goes far out and hooks a great fish that tows his boat all afternoon and night and even the next day too. As the second night turns to dawn, he finally harpoons his prey, lashes it to his skiff and makes his way to home. As he sails slowly to the port, sharks start attacking the marlin and he fights with them as best as he can. The sharks eat all the flesh of the fish leaving behind only the skeleton. Santiago returns to the shore with the skeleton and being half dead with fatigue, makes his way to his hut to sleep and dream of better days.

As it is mentioned earlier that this study will deal with the way directors have adapted written works to create their original cinematic representation. Adaptations stand a bit different from the original work and can operate as an extension of the original source. This view is justified when we come across introduction of daughter of Santiago, Angelo in the movie who is not a character in the literary work of Hemingway. The audience is able to see in the film that the old man has been given a daughter who is already married, has two children and lives in the nearby city. The cinematic representation shows that she visits Santiago on the evening before he sails out for fishing. His daughter tries her best to persuade him to come and join her and her family in the city where the life is better and cleaner. But Santiago, stubborn as he is, wants to stay at his shack only for his next voyage, so his daughter leaves him taking offence. Two days later, when Santiago has not returned for the night, the daughter visits the village again. She is brought into contact with Hemingway and his wife through Manolin, the associated boy of Santiago. Through this scene, introduction of Hemingway and his wife is quite noticeable who have not given any character in the novel. Manolin who has all positive faith in the old man does not worry about him but three of them including Santiago's daughter, Hemingway and his wife are presented worrying and thinking about him.

These additional characters although do not change the basic story line of the novel yet they are kind of extension. Hemingway, his wife and Santiago's daughter represent the urban life in the film whereas the novel does not carry these specific concepts. The cinematic adaptation results in these new events of the additional characters for more variety and make the film more interesting.

Taking into consideration, the novel of Hemingway when after killing the great fish, he tied it up on the side of the boat and beaten off the first shark attack, the old man says "but man is not made for defeat : "A man can be destroyed but not defeated"². With this Santiago wants to convey that a man can be destroyed physically as he lost his harpoon, has no food, little sleep, cramps in his hand

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etc, but he is not defeated because he is able to make out what he wanted ,through his mental strength and perseverance. So he owes his victory over the Marlin, sharks and other problems to his mental condition (praying, hope etc.) In the book, sense of determination is only expressed by the central character Santiago where as in the film, Hemingway, his wife and daughter of Santiago repeats it time and again. This shows that characters other than the central emphasize the sense of determination, with the better display of emotions.

Idea of flashbacks and frequent remembrance of the past plays an important role in the novel whereas the filmmaker has made the story less longwinded through its less usage. Film is limited and compress events into a set duration of time .the meaning of the novel is controlled by one person-the author, whereas the meaning that we get from the film is the result of the collective efforts of number of people associated with it. Film does not allow us the same freedom as the novel does to interact with the plot, past, characters by imagining them in our minds. Idea of consistent flashbacks and remembrance is used by the novelist every time when Santiago faces a problem to cope with. He thinks of lions on the beach which represent him when he was young and strong and could overcome any challenge. He remembers great softball player Di-Maggio in whom he has faith and he wants to be strong as him and about the young boy Manolin in his home village. He wants to be with him so that he may help him during the struggle. All these memories of his youth are characterized by faith and bravery which can be read in the novel frequently.

The plot and the storyline of the book and the film are similar because basically it deals with the tragic tale of an aged Cuban fisherman's futile battle with the huge Marlin. Santiago's struggle and troubles are still the same in both the different artistic genres except the movies makes the audience feel more pity for the old man through the cinematic representation. The way the central character manages with great courage and endurance in a three day struggle to catch a great fish can be better understood and felt through cinema. It is through the film that the facial expressions of the protagonist can be read and the pain that he went through is identified. Moreover, the scenic beauty of the sea at dusk and dawn is beautifully presented in the movie which can only be perceived while reading out the literary work. The filmmaker uses pleasing artistic techniques to present the wide blanket of Deep Ocean. Lastly when Santiago succeeded in what he destined for a long time. The filmmaker artistically presented an irresistible smile on the face of protagonist face when he remarked "I have done it" handling of all the above factors can be perfectly dealt and expressed through film adaption.

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Santiago's concern for boy Manolin, and the boys love and care for the old man is presented elegantly in both the artistic genres. The boy has been serving as a companion and assistant to Santiago and feel greatly attached to him. The boy has a great admiration for the old man's qualities as a fisherman. He thinks Santiago to be the best fisherman "There but are many good fishermen and some great ones, but there is only you"³ said the boy. Manolin contributes greatly to the pathos of this novel. His attachment to the old man is quite touching and he presented equally meaningful in both the ways, original source and adaptation.

From the present study, it can be said that while adapting the literary work into cinema, the screen writer of chosen movie may have brought certain changes in characterization or tone but overall message of the novel is retained. Rather than considering which is better, the comparison considers the unique attributes of both the literary genres. Film and literature each have their own tools for manipulating the narrative structure. In a novel, a new chapter might take us back to a different time and place in the narrative. In a film we might go back to the same place through the use of flashbacks, cross cut, such as the various techniques a film maker uses. To distinguish the differences between these two mediums and their ability to tell a story mark the separation of adaptation and the original work. Through the film, the different levels of adaptation and the respective styles of director come together to allow audience to view a world that previous could only be imagined by the reader.

Works Cited

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