Chapter III

Theories of Adaptation: Novel to Film
THEORIES OF ADAPTATION: NOVEL TO FILM

The critical writings of film theorists like André Bazin, Bela Balázs, George Bluestone and Sergei Eisenstein thoroughly survey the nature and method of the adaptation as an inter relative thing between literature and film. The theories of Bela Balázs appeared between 1920 and 1930 and are of great importance to a historical perspective of the adaptation process. Balázs in his collection of essays, "Theory of the Film: Character and Growth of a New Art" argues that film script is an entirely new literary form. According to Balázs, the novel should be regarded, as a potential raw material to be transformed at will by the writer of the screenplay. He says that the screenplay has the capacity to approach reality, to approach the thematic and the formal design of the literary model and represent it with a viewpoint incorporating a new aesthetic design and technology, creating thus a new artistic version:

It is also admitted that the literary foundation of the new art, new script, is just as much specific, independent literary form as the written stage play-there is nothing to prevent them from being literary masterpieces- the film script is an entirely new form.1 (pp.246-247)

Balázs further argues that even though an adaptation takes the subject of another work such as Kafka's novel or Shakespeare's play, the adaptation is an entirely new entity. Literature provides the raw material for film adaptation to create new visual forms and thematic contents; there are several variations possible. The silent film version of *Othello* (1952) and Welles' adaptation of *The Trial*
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(1962) illustrates Balázs' contention that adaptations are distinctive works of art.

Balázs in his thesis also assumes that an adaptation inspite of being a new work of art bears an obligation to some kernel of truth, similar to Eisenstein's concept of "initial general image".² That is to say that there is one single truth conveyed by a written piece of literature. However, Balázs' remark remains of seminal importance. He abandons the notion of equivalence and affords the filmmaker; complete license to extract what is useful and abandon what is not for the necessities of the cinematic medium. Balázs, in his book Theory of the Film says:

> a film script writer adapting the play may use the existing work of art merely as raw material, regard it from the specific angle of his own art form as it were raw reality, and pay no attention to the form once already given to the material.³ (p. 263).

However, what Balázs calls 'raw reality' is something, which has already been meditated upon and interpreted. Balázs' main contribution is his contention that the adaptation is an independent work; a stimulus which is neither inherently inferior to its source, nor less worthy than the so-called "original work". Alone amongst the theorists, Balázs suggests that the crucial process of adaptation from a literary source occurs not in the filming but in the creation of the screenplay.

There is however considerable disagreement with Balázs' opinions, especially in Siegfried Kracauer and André Bazin's theories. Kracauer introduced the concept of 'cinematic and uncinematic'.
According to him, adaptations make sense only when the content of the novel is firmly rooted in objective reality, not in mental and spiritual experience. He found that realistic and naturalistic novels like Steinbeck's *Grapes of Wrath* (1840) have been suitably or rather realistically translated on the screen. On the other hand, a novel whose primary movement occurs in the character, such as Camus' *The Outsider* is doomed at the outset of the adaptation enterprise. For Kracauer, the Cinema is essentially visual and film techniques such as the voice over or the superimpositions are signs of failure of the visual imagination or worse, impropriety of the subject matter. Thus Kracauer is saying that the interior life of the characters must be visually rendered in a manner that is natural to the material world and not with special effects. The adaptation is at the service of the source as long as it remains visually faithful to the form and content of the material without any attempt at transcending it.

According to Kracauer, if an adaptation fails, the fault lies not in the film but in their sources, which are considered either "cinematic or uncinematic". In his book, *Theory of Film* he says that the "redemption of physical reality" is the only true purpose of Cinema an examination of the psychological state of Emma Bovary has no place in the scheme. As Kracauer proceeds to refine the "theory" it becomes even more jargonised and obscure. He says:

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Actually the adaptability of a novel depends not so much on its exclusive devotion to the material world as on its orientation towards contents which still fall into the dimensions of psychophysical correspondence.
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The notion of equivalence between literature and its cinematic adaptation is clothed in jargon and disguised as "psychophysical correspondence". But how does one determine what falls into this so-called "dimension" which is an entirely arbitrary category. Whereas Kracauer argues that equivalence emerges from a potentially responsive text, Bruce Morrissette locates the supposed equivalence in aesthetic response. He says:

".....there exists beyond the word on the page and beyond the images on the screen as well, a common field of imagination in which the work of art, visual, auditory or verbal, takes on its effective aesthetic form and meaning." 6

Morrissette believes that the conveyance of images is the common goal of film and literature. Both attempt to make the mind see by projecting on to the inner screen of the brain moving picture of objects and events. Images conveyed by word and by picture undergo a sea change in the process of reception, to find a common identity in "a unified field of inner aesthetic response."

"... so the apparently 'final' surface of the film image is quickly transferred into the imaginary realm, where it becomes productive of inner images, pseudo-memories, associative, parasitic recalls and conjectures." 7

Morrissette’s premise aims at equivalence between page and screen, which is practically impossible, because the novel and the film are different forms, which of necessity cannot evoke parallel responses. Jean Mitry who believes that faithfulness to the text is not possible says that ‘the Dickens’ films of David Lean do not attempt to translate the novelist’s significations but they do successfully seek
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to reproduce the things signified by the words:

at the level of mise-en-scene, if we define the phrase simply as the creation of the dramatic space, the adapter can compose the world which the novel suggests, its climate, its ambience and record it with camera. ⁸

a process which according to Mitry is neither a creation nor an expression but only representation or illustration. He thinks at best a film can provide a valuable reflection of the original as in David Lean's *Great Expectations* (1946) or *Oliver Twist*. However Mitry proposes the very same criteria that he firmly rejects elsewhere:

"scrupulous fidelity to the original work is equally impossible as in the reproduction of the things signified as in the translation of significations." ⁹

The idea that it is possible to achieve the same effects in Cinema as in literature has a long history in film theory. In his essay "Word and Images" Eisenstein proposes a cinematic method for equaling the emotional impact of midnight striking for Georges Du Ray in Maupassant's *Bel Ami*: "... 12 'O' clock in sound is denoted by means of a whole series of shots from different camera angles. "This striking of clocks from various distances intensifies the impact as in the look". ¹⁰ Eisenstein discovered shooting scripts in almost all-literary works. He established the principal of equivalence in his seminal essay "Dickens, Griffith and Film Today"(1949) in which he argues that the root of American film aesthetics are to be found in the Victorian novel. He discovers a dissolve in *A Tale of Two Cities* (1859), a montage in *Oliver Twist* and camera technique everywhere. In his essay "Word and Image", he implies that through montage
equal effects can be achieved both on page and screen:

Before the inner vision, before the perception of the creator, however a given image, emotionally embodying his theme - the task that confronts him is to transform this image into a few basic partial representations which, in their composition and juxtaposition shall evoke in the consciousness and feelings of the spectator, reader or auditor, that same initial general image which originally hovered before the creative artist.11

Such a theory is based on the premise that the creative imagination constructs an organic vision before the process of creation begins. It fails to confront the fact that it is impossible to achieve precise control over audience response no matter how carefully the partial representations are forged into a montage pattern. Moreover the mode of representation or the means of communication inevitably affect the shape of the message and consequently helps to determine the nature of the response.

René Clair the famous French film director however sharply differed with Kracauer and developed his film theory in 1926 beyond this proscribed range. He believed that and adaptation was not artistically "whole" if it merely reproduces its literary source. René Clair denigrated the films structured to parallel the temporal and chronological sequencing of its literary source, and this according to him was not true Cinema, but filmed theater or a filmed novel. According to René Clair the adaptation is an intermediatory formal design between two media, literature and film. He asserted that it is
the mediating and interpretive intelligence of the director or scriptwriter to render a sensibility and an aesthetic design to an adaptation.

One of the major studies from the United States to evaluate the interrelative process between literature and film, specifically, the novel and the film was George Bluestone's *Novels into film* (1957). Bluestone asserts that the successful screenwriter in an adaptation must understand the limitation of the film medium and make a serious adjustment to a set of different and other conflicting conventions, conventions that have historically distinguished literature from the autonomous entities, the adaptation must link these "conflicting conventions". According to Bluestone, an adaptation was a type of raw material that paraphrases thematic content. Characters, key incidents and thematic high points become progenitive qualities for the film. Bluestone's concludes with a premise that the adapter thus becomes a true author, not a mere translator of another's work. This is almost paraphrasing Balázs. It is also Bluestone's contention that the film adaptation will inevitably become a different artistic entity from the novel on which it is based. This suggests that the adaptation is not simply a stage between two media, as René Clair classifies it. Bluestone illustrates the interrelative link with the following image: "like two intersecting lines, novel and film meet at a point then diverge". Yet Bluestone maintains like Kracauer that certain novels are not suitable for film
adaptations and then he adds:

What is peculiarly filmic and what is peculiarly novelistic cannot be converted without destroying an integral part of each. That is why Proust and Joyce would seem absurd for film. 12

The influential French critic André Bazin is of the view that reality is multi layered. Empirical reality, the world as depicted from sensory perception, contains interrelationship that the film can discover. According to him, an artist's vision should be ascertained from the selection he makes of reality. The medium of film creates not purely from technical means, but from the presentations of select aspects of subject matter. In contrast to the 'raw material of Balázs, Bazin believed that faithfulness to a literary source, its "spirit" was its fundamental nature of adaptation. The novel and the drama are not raw material to take from and render visually. Bazin concludes that Cinema rediscovers the essential experience of the subject matter by its own technical devices keeping in mind the vision of the creator and the spirit of the work by an infusion of tone. Cinema adaptation, according to him intensifies and reveals nuances and details of its literary source.

In his essay, In Defence of Mixed Cinema, he argues that fidelity as a virtue and that adaptation should be regarded as a form of translation from one language to another: "...a good adaptation is the essence of the letter and the spirit."13 The filmmaker is regarded as a deliberate craftsman who requires all of his powers of invention to create a new structure different from but parallel to the original.
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Bazin's thesis depends upon "an understanding of the text" which is labeled fortunate if it coincides with that of the critic. Inevitably adaptation involves selective perception and interpretation, in the process "fidelity" becomes a meaningless label.

Bazin feels that a film is neither the product of translation or free inspiration, but the result of a creative dialectic. Film according to Bazin, is a question of building a secondary work with the novel as foundation. In no sense is the film "comparable" to the novel or "worthy" of it. It is a new aesthetic creation, the novel so to speak, multiplied by the Cinema. For Bazin, the novel is a stimulus and the adapter is an interpreter. Bazin's writings on the interrelations between the novel and the film also explicitly refers to a fidelity to the spirit of the text as a primary aesthetic design of the adaptation. A successful film adaptation according to him is neither a replication nor a substitute; it is re-experience in another medium.14

Lester Asheim, another film theorist contends that the film oversimplifies, exaggerates, overstates, romanticises and dramatises the theme of the novel. His basic assumption is that the film trivialises its original. He believes that the movement from novel into film necessitates changes:

Essentially this is a stylistic change which substitutes a pictorial style for the literary style of the novel. It alters the manner of storytelling but need not alter the matter.15

Asheim fails to recognise that form or content, style and matter
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cannot be divorced. The form determines the content as completely as the content determines the form. The emphasis on faithfulness to the written text makes the adaptations lose its creative claims. An adaptation seen in that perspective can never be equal to, or better than its source. Commenting on the film’s frequent alteration of the source Lester Asheim says that such manipulation, if not immoral is at least grossly dishonest:

The audience that knows only the film and not the book is presented with a 'falsified' interpretation which leaves no clues that would permit it to reconstruct the original truth.16

Asheim thus implies that an adaptation is an inferior version of its source. Kracauer is equally dismissive. No matter how "cinematic" a novel might be, "there are no genuinely cinematic literary forms".17 Bluestone is a little more positive in his attitude to the role of adaptations. According to him, fiction is metamorphosed into a new artistic entity. In asserting that a filmmaker is not simply a translator but a new author, his bias becomes apparent. He says:

In film criticism, it has always been easy to recognise how a poor film 'destroys' a superior novel. What has not been sufficiently recognised is that such destruction is inevitable.18

The film adaptation is thus viewed as nothing more than a failed form. Even Mitry an arch opponent of fidelity cannot resist a dismissive shrug at the adaptations:

If one wants to replace an entire infrastructure, it is hardly necessary to study the old one 19
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thus implying that there is no obligation to the original so why bother to adapt novels at all.

The famous film director of France, Bresson had claimed that his movie *Diary of a Country Priest* (1950) follows its original source by the same name and written by Bernanos, page by page. Bazin commented upon the film by saying that Bresson's film is not better than but "more than the book". Inspite of the fidelity to the text which Bazin insisted upon, the film by Bresson provides a wholly different experience. A direct verbal borrowing from a book is changed totally when seen and heard along with a visual. The Italian "New Wave" film director had once suggested that the ultimate literary adaptation could be a close up on a book with pages turned at regular intervals. But even this strategy would not provide a faithful rendition of the novel for the experience of viewing a film is inherently different from that of reading a novel.

The French Auteurists never treated filmmaking as a "seventh art" or as a separate art but as an equal member of cultural pantheon. They spoke of film as language and the film director as a kind of writer, motivated by a desire for personal expression wielding a lens instead of a pen. They elevated the cinematic mise-en-scene (the director's treatment of camera movement, space, décor and editing) to a greater importance than the scenario. Some of the filmmakers deliberately avoided adaptations of great literature in order to foreground their own artistry.
Since the 1960's, writing on adaptation has made use of important theoretical writings on both literature and film, including the structuralist and poststructuralist *Poetics* of Roland Barthes, the *Narratology* of Gerard Genette and the *Neo-Formalism* of David Bordwell and Kirstin Thompson. In general, however it continues to waver back and forth between the two approaches; one exemplified by Bluestone and the second by the Auteurists. The Bluestone approach relies on an implicit metaphor of translation, which governs all investigations of how codes move across sign systems. Writing in this category pays close attention to the problem of textual fidelity in order to identity the specific formal capabilities of the media. By contrast, the Auteurists approach relies on a metaphor of performance. They also deal with questions of textual fidelity but it emphasizes difference rather than similarity, individual styles rather than formal systems.

Roland Barthes while defining the essence of a narrative function claims that, "a narrative is never made up of anything other than functions : in differing degrees, everything in it signifies." He distinguishes between two main groups of narrative functions; distribution and integration and he names them as *Functions Proper* and *Indices*. The former refers to actions and events; they are horizontal in nature and they are strung together linearly in a text and refer to a functionality of doing. *Indices* denotes a 'more or less diffuse concept which is nevertheless necessary to the meaning of the text.' They are vertical in nature and refers to data of
identity, place atmosphere i.e. to a functionality of being. The most important kinds of transfer possible from novel to film are located in the category of Functions Proper rather than Indices. Barthes further subdivides functions to include Cardinal Functions (nuclei) and 'Kernels' in Seymour Chatman's terms. Cardinal Functions are hinge point of narratives. They are the risky moments of the narrative they provide the possibility of alternatives of consequence to the development of the story. Deletion or alteration of Cardinal Functions may result in critical disappointment towards a film version.

Catalysers are the other part of Function Proper which are complementary to Cardinal Functions and denotes small actions. Their role is to root the Cardinal Functions in a particular kind of reality, and enrich it. In Barthes' words unlike the risky moments laid out by Cardinal Functions, the Catalysers 'lay out areas of safety, rests, luxuries'.

Cardinal Functions or Catalysers are not dependent on language and hence can be directly transferred from one medium to another. But in Indices only the 'informant' part of the Indices can be transferred because that contains data of names, age, profession of character etc. and details of physical setting. The Indices Proper which relates to concepts of characters, atmosphere may not be transferable. Barthes however modified this structural taxonomy in his book S/Z by introducing five narrative codes, which structure
all classical narrative. Brian McFarlane in his work *Novel to Film* (1996) borrows Barthes' categories of *Cardinal Functions*, *Catalysers* and suggests procedures for distinguishing between that which can be transferred from one medium to another (essentially, narrative) and that which being dependent on different signifying systems cannot be transferred (essentially enunciation).

Dudley Andrew in his book *Concepts in Film Theory* talks about three modes of relation between the film and the text: borrowing, intersection and fidelity of transformation. While borrowing meant simple process of transfer of 'generality of the original' which continues to exist as an archetype in culture. Intersection would at best be understood as initiating a direct interplay of between aesthetic forms of one period and the cinematic forms of our period and trying to adapt what forms of our period, trying to adapt what resists adaptation. Adaptation for Dudley Andrew then becomes a search in two systems of communication for elements of equivalent positions, for example the description of a narrative action. Andrew however saw a futuristic potential in the study of film adaptations. He felt that they should not be merely used as illustrations to emphasise either the essence of the media or the inviolability of individual artworks. They should in fact be used to understand 'the world it comes from and the world towards which it points'.

Andrew was of the view that adaptation studies should take sociological turn, by trying to understand the film discourse and the
forces that motivate it. Robert B. Ray echoes a similar sentiment in his essay, 'The Field of Literature and Film'. He feels that the distinctive feature of present age was that media industry with its shared representations are converging from every side to shape our unconscious. We still have not learnt the art of using images and sounds combined with language as a tool for pedagogy. Our academics are still bound to the word. He goes on to cite examples of explorations into transactions between the word and image:

Freud’s positing of the unconscious (and the dream), Eisenstein’s and Pound’s fascination with the Chinese ideogram, Barthes’ semiotic inquiries into the relationships between photograph and caption, Godard’s experiments with language remotivating imagery... etc. etc. are precedents in this area of word and image.

What Robert B. Ray is trying to suggest is that word and image in their adapted forms have come to stay and the focus should now shift from purely academic studies of adaptation to using such adaptations for new purposes. One of the purposes that immediately come to mind is ‘as a tool of pedagogy’ adaptation studies can be used creatively. Moreover, such studies will also reveal the intertextuallity that operates in media and how they structure public opinion and social thought at a given time and place.

Screen adaptations have been viewed differently by different film theorists. While André Bazin saw them as translations from a linguistic medium to a visual medium, George Bluestone called it a new work of art, where adapter was the creator. Joy Gould Boyum
felt that films based on great literary works were critical interpretation. What we have in a film adaptation is a transformation from one way of seeing to another. The process of this transformation allows the best approach to an understanding of the differences and similarities that exist between these two modes of representation i.e. film and literature.

The film version of a novel could be also be a critical essay emphasising the main theme of the novel. Like criticism, the film adaptation selects some episodes, excludes others, and offers preferred alternatives. It may focus on specific areas in the novel, expand or contract details and may also indulge in fanciful flights about some characters. This critical gloss may make it even more convincing than the original, and hence enrich the appreciation of the novel. Analysis of these two modes of representation goes back to the early days of filmmaking, when movies were frequently conceived in theatrical terms and when "classics" from literature were often made into films. The trend is popular that the authors consider screen rights of their work when sent for publishing. Authors like Ruth Prawer Jhabvala, Tom Stoppard and Harold Pinter have become full time screenplay writers for screen adaptations. About one fourth of all films made in the world are adaptations and the percentage is even higher in England and United States. A successful novel assures the producer of a ready made audience for the film and hence the project is inherently lucrative.
The literary work from which an adaptation is drawn is inevitably inscribed in the cinematic text itself, whether the adaptation is a complete replication of the source text or a new entity has been debated over years. However, there is yet another aspect, which needs consideration. Many adaptations that have been faithful to the text have somehow appeared as utter betrayals of the source text for e.g. Hardy's *Jude the obscure* (1895). On the contrary Akira Kurosawa's *Throne of Blood* (1957) based on *Macbeth*, which altered the story, setting, character and time frame and the language, is still held to be one of the greatest Shakespeare adaptations ever.

In order to differentiate between variations undertaken in adaptations, the film theorists have attempted to classify adaptations, arranging them into modes or types. They find their precedent however in literary theory i.e. in the translation theory propounded by John Dryden:

**Metaphrase:** Translating an author word by word and line by line, from one language to another.

**Paraphrase:** Where the author is not literally translated word by word but his sense is retained and amplified.

**Imitation:** Where the translator assumes the liberty not only to vary from the words and sense, but to forsake them both as he sees occasion; and taking only some general hints from the original.
The analogy with translation is quite relevant. Like a translator, the filmmaker who adapts, must demonstrate some fidelity to the source text and at the same time create a new work of art in a new language, in this case the cinematic language. Morris Beja sees two main classifications: the first approach asks for complete integrity of the original work and the second approach is to adapt the original work freely, in order to create in a different medium, a new kind of art with its own integrity.

Michael Klein and Gillian Parker identifies three types of adaptation. In the first category are the faithful impressions that is literal translation; the second category retains the core of the structure of the narrative while significantly re-interpreting or in some cases de-constructing the source text; and the third regards the source material merely as raw material. Apocalypse Now (1979) based on Conrad's Heart of Darkness (1902) in cited as an example for the third category. Geoffrey Wagner, as if taking a cue from John Dryden's translation model, identifies three methods of dramatisation:

**Transposition:** In which a novel is directly given on the screen, with the minimum of apparent interference. Wagner calls this method most pervasive, least satisfactory and puerile.

**Commentary:** In which an original is either purposely or inadvertently altered to re-emphasise or restructure. Commentaries could act as authentic reconstructions and operate as cinematic
footnotes to the original.

**Analogy:** In analogy, the fiction is taken as a point of departure. To judge whether or not a film is a successful adaptation of a novel is to evaluate the skill of its makers in striking analogous attitudes and in finding analogous rhetorical techniques. An analogy is merely a departure and not a literary original.

Wagner provides examples for various categories, among which are Robert Stevenson's film *Jane Eyre* (1944), William Wyler's *Wuthering Heights* (1939) and Vincent Minnelli's *Madame Bovary* (1949) are seen as transpositions; Mike Nichols' *Catch 22* (1970) as a commentary and Luchtino Visconti's *Death in Venice* (1971) as an analogy.

Dudley Andrew widened the adaptation debate by including all representational films as adaptation. He observes that every representational film adapts a prior conception. Adaptations can also be seen as personal discourse culled out from stories and histories surrounding us. Dudley Andrew identifies three types of adaptation from prose to screen:

**Borrowing:** It is not an attempt to replicate the original work, instead the audience calls up new or powerful aspects of a cherished work.

**Intersection:** In this method there is a refusal to adapt, instead there is an attempt to present the distinctness of the original text,
and to give its own life in the Cinema, involving an interplay between the aesthetic forms of one period and cinematic techniques of this age.

**Fidelity or Transformation:** In this method, the aim is to reproduce something essential about an original text and the film is a skeleton of the original, which tries to measure up to a literary work.

Andrew’s categories are not distinctly different from each other. This perhaps is an indication of an important characteristic of adaptation, which is that there is no single type of correspondence between films and their literary sources. It also follows that the element of fidelity, criticism, transformation will always operate in various degrees in all screen adaptations of literary text. The adaptations somehow always subvert its original by performing a dual task of masking and unveiling its source.

After debating upon the ‘how’ of adaptation, we inevitably come to the ‘why’ of adaptation. The sociological issues such as the methods of production, distribution and consumption of the novel and film are also an area of consideration. The adaptations not only add to the body of interpretation, criticism and analysis of the text but also lead to the renewal of interest in the book itself. The sales of the book increase with new editions being printed, for eg: the Film Director, Deepa Mehta made Bapsi Sidhwa’s *Ice Candy Man* (1991) into a film recently. The film version of the novel *1947: Earth* (1997)
generated a lot of interest and that led to a reprint and new edition of the book- this time titled as *1947: A Fractured Nation*. The new edition encashed on the publicity unleashed by the popular film director. The author in order to provide an authenticity to the autobiographical narrative appears in person, in the film. However, the reverse is also true. Films based on original scripts also have simultaneous publication of a ‘novelisation’ i.e. the book on the film or the screenplay published as a book. A Mira Nair film *Salaam Bombay* (1988) had a book release based on its screenplay by Sooni Taraporewala.

Adaptations are obviously undertaken for a variety of reasons, ranging from bringing of a literary text to a wider audience, sometimes to cash in on its cultural respectability and popularity or sometimes to comment upon or develop an aspect of the original text. Gaston Roberge adds to the debate by asking the following questions:

> Why is a particular novel chosen for adaptation at a particular time?

> What ideological transformation is the novel submitted to in the process of adaptation?

In this context, he goes on to ask why Ray chose to film *Pather Panchali* in the early 1950’s and why he changed the structure of the novel such that it was a total cinematic refraction? Why were so many Mahabharatas’ (Bencgal’s and Sippy’s) produced in 1980’s and 1990’s?
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To answer Roberge one would have to look for sociological reasons like- either the ideological stand of the director was being conveyed through these ventures or the issues highlighted in the literary text were somehow relevant to the period and hence didactic in nature.

To look at such attempts differently one would say the subject matter lent itself beautifully to the film medium. Merchant-Ivory productions monopolising on James and Forster novels must have had such sociological or ideological motivations.

In the history of Cinema, repeated cinematic adaptations of a particular classic are not a rarity. The compulsion to transcreate a particular text over and over again is an interesting phenomenon. It is like rereading or rewriting a text in different times, from different points of view. The varied renderings of a written text no doubt enrich the source text by providing it with footnotes and a fresh interpretation. A brief evaluation of two such texts and their film version will highlight this contention. Charles Dickens' *Great Expectations* (1861) and Charlotte Bronte's *Jane Eyre* (1847) are two such classics, which have been adapted for film several times. Two such film versions of each text have been picked at random for analysis. These film versions of each text are greatly distanced in time and hence in treatment. These film versions not only convey different meanings and ideological shifts but also belong to different categories of adaptation.
An evaluation of three more film adaptations will be undertaken to show how the constitution of meaning takes place when a novel is adapted for a film. The three texts are Henry James's *The Portrait of a lady* (1882) and *The Bostonians* (1886) and Rabindranath Tagore's *The Home and the World* (1919).

Charles Dickens' *Great Expectations* has inspired several film versions till date. The following data is an indication of that: -

**Movies**

2. *Great Expectations* (1917)
3. *Great Expectations* (1934)
4. *Great Expectations* (1946)
5. *Great Expectations* (1971)
7. ...aka *Great Expectations* (1922) *(UK: literal English title)*
8. Captain Jinks' Great Expectations (1917)

**TV-Movies**


David Lean's film by the same name in 1946 is considered to be a literal translation of the Dickens' novel. It is a *Transposition* in Geoffrey Wagner's term in which a novel is directly given to the screen with minimum interference. However, Alfonso Cuaron's 1997 version may at best be called a *Commentary* in, which there is a
refusal to literally translate. It is purposely altered to re-emphasise and reconstruct.

Great Expectations

Filmography:
- UK Release-1946
- Directed by: -David Lean
- Screenplay: -David Lean (Based on a novel by Charles Dickens)
- Running time: Netherlands: 118 / UK: 118
- Language: English
- Color: Black and White

Cast:
- John Mills (I) .... Pip
- Anthony Wager .... Young Pip
- Valerie Hobson .... Estella/Molly
- Jean Simmons .... Young Estella
- Bernard Miles .... Joe Gargery
- Francis L. Sullivan .... Mr. Jaggers
- Finlay Currie .... Magwitch
- Martita Hunt .... Miss Havisham
- Alec Guinness .... Herbert Pocket
- Ivor Barnard .... Mr. Wemmick
- Freda Jackson .... Mrs. Joe
- Eileen Erskine .... Biddy
- George Hayes (I) .... Convict
- Hay Petrie .... Uncle Pumblechook
Great Expectations

Filmography

- Directed by: Alfonso Cuarón
- Screenplay: Mitch Glazer (Based on a novel by Charles Dickens)
- Runtime: Argentina: 112 / Australia: 113 / Sweden: 111 / USA: 111
- Country: USA
- Language: English
- Color: Color (Technicolor)

Cast:

- Ethan Hawke .... Finnegan 'Finn' Bell
- Gwyneth Paltrow .... Estella
- Hank Azaria .... Walter Plane
- Chris Cooper (I) .... 'Uncle' Joe
- Anne Bancroft .... Ms. Nora Dinsmoor
- Robert De Niro .... Prisoner Arthur Lustig
- Josh Mostel .... Jerry Ragno
- Kim Dickens .... Maggie Bell
- Nell Campbell .... Erica Thrall
- Gabriel Mann .... Owen
- Jeremy James Kissner .... Finnegan Bell at Age 10
- Raquel Beaudene .... Estella at Age 10
- Stephen Spinella .... Carter Macleish
- Marla Sucharetza .... Ruth Shepard
- Isabelle Anderson .... Lois Pope
Let us review the two film versions to understand how these adaptations work. Though the David Lean version is thematically close to the novel; it is in the process of selective omissions that Lean's film shifts focus. To conform to the film form the first person narration of Pip is the first casualty. Pip an orphan in the novel has perhaps only the reader for his company and his self-discovery is both poignant and humorous as he trudges alone. But a straightforward depiction of a poor, orphan boy merely evokes pity. Another character Jaggers with his creaking books and a habit of washing hands is immediately stereotyped the moment he is visualised in concrete terms. Dickens hardly describes Jaggers in his novel and his visualisation in the film immediately robs him off his subtle delineation in the novel. The abandonment of the first person narrative in the film version results in a serious shift of emphasis. The entire time sequence in the novel - the past and present is seen through Pip's eyes. This technique not only conveys Pip's limited perspective on things but also the tension emanating from his class struggle. Moreover, Pip reveals many things about himself which Pip himself is not aware and all such ironies are somehow lost in the film version.

The removal of a character called Orlick in the film again shifts the emphasis. Orlick in many ways is the dark, evil, alter ego of Pip. Orlick like Pip wants Biddy and hates Pip's sister. Pip wants to
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marry Biddy on being refused by the enigmatic Estelle in the novel reveals a side of Pip, which is not very commendable. Pip uses Biddy remorselessly to drown his sexual frustrations. The film version very tightly sketches this relationship, and Pip is made to look like a forsaken lover who is generous to accept Biddy and his own lowly origins. To quote Neil Sinyard:-

Orlick is a remarkable inspiration of Dickens, a free ranging agent of chaos, who seems determined to bring down the structure of the novel... he seems to represent a terrifying image of Pip's repressed shadowside, Orlick's attack on Mrs. Gargery being an extension of Pip's own repressed wish to avenge himself on his sister. There is no room for Orlick (in the film version) because there is no room in Lean's interpretation for that black side of Pip.35

Lean saw Pip's great expectations in the framework of greater social mobility for the aspirational working class in Britain. He is not only magnanimous in Pip's characterisation. Pip's social embarrassment and Joe's awkwardness during their meeting in London is treated more as a humorous piece rather than as a comment on Pip's snobbery.

Lean treats the ending of the novel in an interesting manner. The novel ends with the line- 'I saw no shadow of another parting from her'. In the film Pip in an act of defiance tears down the curtains of Miss Havisham's room and rescues Estella who is threatening to slip into Miss Havisham's shoes by being a lonely and disillusioned spinster. Pip's tearing down of curtains and ushering in sunlight makes him a perfect Hollywood hero who rescues a damsel in distress. In the film version Pip is given courage and defiance that
Dickens's Pip is perhaps incapable of Great Expectation thus becomes a romantic tragedy rather than a social one. The actors who portray various characters of the novel give convincing performances except the hero and heroine. There are some great cinematic moments in the film; the fight between Herbert and Pip when they first meet in Satis House, the unexpected appearance of Magwitch in the churchyard and the boat making in 1940's, even if they do not seem Dickensian in their flavour and texture.

The 1997 version by Alfonso Cuaron is at best a Pop rendition of the novel, in the present day setting. The soundtrack is once again modern and the script is a mish mash of broken hearts, revenge and mysterious inheritances- the essential ingredients of a potboiler. The focus is on the relationship between impoverished, young Finn (Dickens' Pip) and his playmate Estella who is aloof. Her Guardian Miss Dinsmoor (Dickens' Miss Havisham) has vowed vengeance on men for being jilted at the wedding altar. However, the characters do not develop except for Ethan Hawke and Gwyneth Paltrow the two leading pairs enacting some bold love making scenes. The emphasis perhaps is on a modern day love story with the theme from a classic and hence the issues get depicted differently. The sequences of music videos and nudity to express sexuality etc. have been introduced to impart to the film with a present-day texture and feel. However, this kind of cinematic coding results in a superficial treatment of the characters in the film. The form thus dictates the content and in this case renders it soulless.
This 1997-film version of *Great Expectations* is a complete departure from the novel. The adaptation attempted in this film version can be termed as Wagner's *Analogy* where the fiction is taken as a point of departure and analogous techniques are used to portray the issues of the original.

Charlotte Bronte's *Jane Eyre* (1847) is yet another novel, which has been adapted for the screen several times. The following data is an indication of that:

**Feature Films**

  ...aka *Jane Eyre* (1996) (*France*)
- *Jane Eyre* (1914)
- *Jane Eyre* (1921)
- *Jane Eyre* (1934)
- *Jane Eyre* (1944)
- *Sangdil* (1952)  
  ...aka *Jane Eyre* (1952)

**TV-Movies**

- *Jane Eyre* (1970) (*TV*)
- *Jane Eyre* (1963) (*TV*)
- *Jane Eyre* (1997) (*TV*)
- *Jane Eyre* (1956) (*TV*)
- *Jane Eyre* (1961) (*TV*)

**TV series**

- "*Jane Eyre"* (1983) (mini) TV series
- "*Jane Eyre"* (1973) (mini) TV series
Jane Eyre

Filmography:

- USA -1944
  - Directed by: -Robert Stevenson (I)
  - Screenplay: John Houseman (Based on a novel by Charlotte Brontë)
  - Runtime: Germany: 98 / USA: 97
  - Language: English
  - Color: Black and White

Cast:

- Orson Welles .... Edward Rochester
- Joan Fontaine .... Jane Eyre
- Margaret O'Brien .... Adele Varens
- Peggy Ann Garner .... Jane Eyre (younger)
- John Sutton (I) .... Dr. Rivers
- Sara Allgood .... Bessie
- Henry Daniell .... Brocklehurst
- Agnes Moorehead .... Mrs. Reed
- Aubrey Mather .... Colonel Dent
- Edith Barrett .... Mrs. Fairfax
- Barbara Everest .... Lady Ingram
- Hillary Brooke .... Blanche Ingram

Jane Eyre

Filmography:

UK-1970

Directed by : Delbert Mann

Language: English

Color: Color
The 1944 version by Robert Stevenson and 1972 version by Delbert Mann, approach Bronte in their individualistic cinematic style and the then existing social ideology then. The Stevenson film was made in the post-World War II period when *Film Noir* was dominant. Women who were actively involved in the war were now increasingly coming back to their hearth. Thus, Joan Fontaine not very surprisingly plays a very meek, docile and submissive Jane to fit social expectations, while Orson Welles as Rochester fits the bill as a swashbuckling Byronic hero.
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There is an interesting deletion and addition in terms of characters in the film, which irrevocably dilutes Bronte's feminist leanings. The character of kind and gentle Miss Temple of the Lowood school in the novel is replaced by one Dr. Rivers, Dr. Rivers though comforting however unlike Miss Temple in the novel tries to tame Jane. He advises her to conform and accept the larger patriarchal society.

Michael Klein and Gillian Parker, see Miss Temple 'as the only mitigating female presence in the novel'. They feel she defies oppression and her warm nurturing presence offsets the horror of Lowood for Jane.

"She provides a powerful model of both Jane and Helen of a principled and intelligent, if ultimately powerless, women". 37

By introducing Dr. Rivers there is an obvious attempt to introduce a benevolent patriarch who will sustain the gender equation by taming of the shrew-Jane. The deletion of St. John Rivers character in the film does not provide a dilemma for Jane which is so essential for an individuals growth. However, in the Delbert Mann film. John Rivers is a handsome man whose advances Jane must reckon with in order to decide for herself. Stevenson uses expressionist, nonrealistic cinematic techniques of using high and low angles to convey the Gothic terror of the Bronte novel. Mrs. Reed and John Rivers tower over Jane and Jane is looked down upon as a small pathetic creature imprisoned in the Red room. The
black and white photography accentuates the palpable terror in the movie. Though Jane is seen as passive, long suffering character forever yearning for Rochester in the Stevenson film, Jane is almost an equal to Rochester in the Delbert Mann film. Delbert Mann's Tele-version was made in the most exuberant and hopeful phase of feminism. The colourful photography takes away the mystery, the Gothicism of the novel and leaves it with rich, sensuous film images. George. C. Scott who plays Rochester is a humane, tired Old man seeking freshness in young Jane.

The Portrait of Lady

Filmography:

- Running Time: 2-hr 25 min. (145 min)
- Director: Jane Campion
- Producer: Monty Montgomery, Mark Turnbull
- Screenplay: Laura Jones (Based on the novel of Henry James)
- Cinematography: Stuart Dryburgh.
- Music: Wojciech Kilar
- Distributors: Grammercy Pictures.

Cast:

- Nicole Kidman – Isabel Archer
- Martin Donavan - Ralph Touchett
- Barbara Hershey – Madame Merle
- John Malkovich – Gilbert Osmond

The Portrait of a Lady (1881) a novel by Henry James, is the story of an innocent, spontaneous American woman caught in the vortex of
decadent European tradition. The novel deals with the clash of American and European value systems and a young woman seeking independence and self-realisation in the stratified terrains of Europe.

Isabel Archer a quintessential Jamesian heroine is a prototype of “intelligent presumptions girls”, “affronting their destiny”. 38 Jane Campion, an Australian filmmaker, internationally acclaimed for her work, filmed the Jamesian classic with a modernist, feminist immediacy in 1996. Campion adapts the 600-page book into one hundred and forty five-minute film. Her adaptation is intensely visual. Using hallucinatory cinematic techniques to portray the entrapment of her heroine Isabel Archer, Campion reinterprets the Jamesian classical lines and gives her film a contemporary, unrepressed eroticism.

The cinematised story runs like this: Isabel Archer an orphaned 23 year old American arrives at Gardencourt, the lush country estate of her English aunt and uncle. She enters a world of whispered plans, conversational codes, and eligible men, most of them fall in love with her. Isabel is bright and beautiful and with her past now gone, she finds herself in 1870’s Europe. She chooses to devote herself entirely to her own future, wandering around Europe in the quest of freedom and in search of her identity and not a life partner she finds a perfect sounding board in her consumptive cousin Ralph. Ralph sees the willful Isabel as a soul mate and the love of
his life. He urges his father, to remember Isabel in his will—“so she will be rich enough to do as she wills” and so Isabel becomes an heiress. The money buys Isabel her freedom, which comes as a bonus for she has already turned down a couple of marriage proposals of an English Lord Warburton and an American businessman Casper Goodwood.

But a fateful meeting in Florence, Italy, with a fellow expatriate Madame Serena Merle changes all that. Isabel is an easy prey and falls for a dilettantish pretentious friend of Madam Merle, Gilbert Osmond. They marry, for different reasons other than love, Isabel, finds him “the incarnation of taste”, while Osmond marries her strictly for her money.

Isabel suffers gravely as a result of her impulsive choice that ends in a disaster. But after the dark truth behind Madame Merle and Osmond’s web of deception and betrayal is revealed, Isabel awakens to a curious freedom. In emerging from the darkness of her folly, Isabel discovers her true love in dying Ralph and in an epiphanic moment, the film ends. Isabel is left standing on a threshold once again with a choice between freedom and entrapment, hope and despair.

Film directors face their greatest challenge when dealing with “classic” material, one because the audience familiarity with the text elicits varied expectations from the cinematic rendering and two the storyline has to be made relevant to suit contemporary
concerns. Campion’s film opens with an opening credit sequence shot in black and white as well as color, sisterly groups of women staring into the camera discussing the experience of kissing, swirling their umbrellas almost has a lesbian overtone. This prologue to the film, one of the many stylistic camera flourishes used in the film, severely anchors the film in 1990’s. This scene is however never revisited and this scene is followed by an abrupt close up of the heroine, which is slightly confusing. The director is perhaps contextualising the character of her heroine who is independent and liberal like the women in the prologue but the connection seems a little laboured.

Jane Campion adds some bold modern touches, such as Isabel’s fantasy of being made love to by three suitors at the same time. Her erotic fantasy is portrayed in surrealistic black and white film print. The camera work is vaguely reminiscent of surrealist filmmakers like Fellini and Luis Bunuel. Campion’s evocative camera work with hand held close-ups and tilted angles all add up to a parallel discourse in the film which makes the film very different from the Merchant-Ivory brand of adaptations. The film is very rich in visual imagery and certain images appear as metaphors, which get repeated in many scenes. Isabel is forever framed by bars and doors, Osmond is shown standing in front of Italian statues with their penises knocked off hence highlighting his emotional emasculation. A surrealistic black-white interlude in a silent documentary style encapsulates Isabel’s dream like journey
through Europe. In a breathtaking sequence, in a European ruin the camera swirls and moves in circular motion and shows a human skeleton in a crevice of the ruin to finally focus on Osmond and Isabel. This scene in a way sets the tenor of their relationship. A sense of doom and foreboding hangs in the air as Osmond reaches out to seduce Isabel. The enigmatic ending of the novel, which has been endlessly debated, is conveyed with equal intensity in the film. In the final shot of the film Isabel is clicked in several stills juxtaposed over one another which could convey either total entrapment or liberation.

Campion’s cinematic discourse attaches a modern sensibility to Isabel, which is very different from James’ carefully crafted motivation. It is interesting to see how a feminist interpretation of the novel which attires the heroine with a sexuality, fundamentally changes the conceptualisation of the character and the plot. Isabel is attracted to Osmond in the novel not so much physically as intellectually. She is very much like George Eliot’s Dorothea Brooke who marries Casaubon because of his scholarly attributes. Isabel is similarly deluded that a taste for art and good things in life invariably emerges from a fine morality and character. Isabel in the film is shown to be ensnared by a scheming vamp Madame Merle and a cunning, crafty Gilbert Osmond. She is shown to be both naive and a victim. However James’s Isabel is seeking self-expansion and an identity and is more or less guilty of a tragic flaw within her. Her tragedy has grandeur in the novel, which is missing
in the film. In the film, she appears to be an abused wife with bruises desperate to get away while in the novel the affairs of her marital disharmony cannot be so simply told.

Jane Campion's cinemascapes is play of light and shadows. She bathes many scenes in golden light to give a period feel and to induce feelings of opulence and wealth of a late nineteenth century setting. The costumes are elaborate and the wearing of corset is a significant framing of a ritual in repression. Now and then, the grand, opulent settings give way to dark corridors, drab, dreary weather with rain pelting on heavily curtained windows.

*The Portrait of a Lady* is a difficult story to film. Jane Campion along with her screenwriter Laura Jones manages to achieve certain tonal similarities with James's novel for e.g. the motifs of love, betrayal and a stultified marriage etc. get well established but the characters somehow remain sketchy and half-baked. In order to accommodate a 600 page novel, a great deal of background is omitted, which makes the film erratic and at times almost incoherent. The script is straightforward and adopts the style of storytelling. The script never shows the inside of the heroine's mind except her sexual fantasies (which is absent in the novel). The script shows nothing remarkable about the heroine (played by Nicole Kidman) and makes the audience wonder as to why everyone is interested in her. The heroine besides being beautiful fails to convey her charisma and fierce independence, which James sets out to portray in his novel.
Gilbert Osmond played by John Malkovich (known in Hollywood for his villainous roles, already carries a baggage of discourse with him) plays the role of an American expatriate who has lived in Florence for years, cultivating a collection of arts and antiquities, seemingly doing nothing else. The story demands that he exerts a nearly irresistible attraction on Isabel, who has been able to resist the attractions of younger, wealthier, more handsome and eligible men. There is absolutely nothing in the script and the film that suggests that such a man would attract such an extraordinary woman. The script gives him no real opportunity to dazzle her with his supposedly exquisite taste, and he doesn’t even seem interested in her Isabel’s infatuated consumptive cousin who is so interested in her destiny. He seems boring and dull rather than an intellectual in the novel. The special relationship the cousins share somehow gets lost in the film.

The film is made up of what happens around events rather than the events themselves. Osmond is never shown proposing to Isabel, which would reveal to us so much about their characters. However, after the event, we see Isabel cruelly inform one of her suitors Goodwood, of the news. Other occurrences are reported rather than shown. Someone comments casually that Isabel had a child with Osmond but lost it. However, we see nothing of the tragedy’s repercussions. In fact, the only clues we have to these characters’ personalities are little announcements offered now and then. We hear Ralph, Goodwood and Warburton all talking about Isabel's
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“coldness”, but to begin with, we never see the heroine as warm and vivacious. In fact throughout the film, she appears prim and arrogant in her elaborate hairdo’s and corseted gowns.

Similarly, we have no clue to the Jamesian prototype of a working, single woman Henrietta Stackpole. She appears as a busybody without a commanding personality, in fact a caricature of the Jamesian portrayal. Madame Merley played by Barbara Hershey (she received an Oscar for her performance) has none of the sophistication that James hints at. We once again have no clue that her ‘American soul is ruined’ by the faded, corruption of European culture and the ‘stultifying Old World sensibilities’. Jane Campion sets out to make a modern, feminist interpretation of the novel and achieves just the opposite. Isabel more than a rebel appears naive, who is plagued by her sexuality and hence falls for the first man who is audacious enough to kiss her and take her by force.

The modern sensibility attributed to Isabel and her companion Henrietta is conveyed through trivial details like, Isabel sticking on her almirah, stickers with words like ‘probity’ and ‘nihilism’ written on them. Henrietta is shown collecting leftover food at the restaurant in a cloth bag with ‘waste not’ embroidered on it. These two scenes seem forced and trivial and a desperate attempt to juxtapose a twentieth century sensibility on nineteenth century women. But there are scenes, which are brilliantly conceptualised and executed. The ball dance sequence is eloquent
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in nineteenth century social prescriptions and societal manipulations. In the backdrop of lavishly clad Italian women out for a matrimonial match, swooning in a heated room, Isabel is shown juggling two suitors for her stepdaughter with dexterity. Campion intelligently juxtaposes the coldness of an arranged marriage against the fever of passion. In yet another scene Ralph, Isabel's consumptive cousin is shown playing with a fly caught in an upturned glass. James' Ralph is not forgiven in the film; he is shown equally responsible for Isabel's fall. Ralph's vicarious pleasure in Isabel's destiny is not ignored in the film. Henry James' clash of American and European sensibilities becomes Campion's clash of nineteenth century and twentieth century sensibilities. Campion's film is saved by excellent cinematography, gorgeous lavish sets and a hauntingly romantic background score.

In the end Henry James' Portrait of a Lady in its cinematic version undergoes an ideological shift and fails to achieve the tragic grandeur of the novel. Though the cinematic version follows a rigorous pattern of visual story telling, in which the play of color, sound, light and shadow, camera movement, all impart meaning, but in effect a new meaning gets constituted, a meaning which is collectively constituted by the cinematographer, editor, scriptwriter, actors and ultimately the director. The reader-viewer than tries to analyse this diverse discourse on the basis of his own individualistic discourse, and hence the gaps are evidently visible. In the end, we need to remind, ourselves that a novelist builds
characters in layers of accumulating details and devotes pages to portray their inner lives. However, a filmmaker who opts for an adaptation of a novel has his job doubled. The filmmaker has not only to make his film visually rewarding but also attempt a gradual revelation of his characters and all this within a span of two to three hours. *The Portrait of a lady* thus assumes a new look in the cinematic medium as a postscript to the source novel.

**Ghare Baire** (The Home and The World)

**Filmography:**

- India 1984-Bengali
- Colour, with English Subtitles
- Direction: Satyajit Ray
- Producer: NFDC
- Screenplay: Satyajit Ray based on a novel by Rabindranath Tagore
- Cinematography: Soumendu Ray
- Editing: Dulal Dutta
- Running time: 140 min

**Cast:**

- Sandeep Mukherjee – Soumitra Chatterjee
- Nikhilesh Choudhury - Victor Bannerjee
- Bimala – Swatilekha Chatterjee

Though Cinema as a medium arrived in India soon after the Lumiere Brothers launched it in Paris, Indian Cinema is still groping for recognition internationally. The reign of Hollywood continues and markets all over the world get dictated and noticed if
they get seen in Oscar Awards. The crowning glory of every cinematic enterprise is an Oscar. Satyajit Ray a stalwart of Indian Cinema managed to clinch an Oscar lifetime achievement award on his deathbed and immediately after India was on the cinematic world map.

Satyajit Ray brought up on European New Wave film Directors like Vittorio De-Sica, Renoir and Bergman, made his first film *Pather Panchali* in 1955 and received awards all over the world. Ray's first venture was a cinematic adaptation of a novella by a Bengali writer Bibhutibhusan Bandopadhyay. In his forty years of filmmaking career he went on to make several films based on novels. He used his medium in a realist fashion, capturing every little detail on camera. His tales were both visual and literary, that was straightforward in presentation but conveyed layers of meaning and interpretation. He wrote his screenplays, directed the music and the camera and even edited his films. In the genre of cinematic adaptations based on literary text, Ray's films cannot be ignored. Ray had assisted James Ivory for his first film *The Householder* (1962) who went on to develop the genre of cinematic adaptation of literary texts.

Let us take a closer look at Ray's *Ghare Baire* (1984) based on Tagore's novel, by the same name (1916). *Ghare Baire* the novel is set in the revolutionary Bengal of 1905 rent with battle cries of 'Swadeshi' and 'Bandematram.' There are three principal characters
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in the novel, Nikhil, Bimala and Sandeep. Nikhil is Bimala's husband while Sandeep is his close friend. The autobiographical account of these protagonists intertwines to make the novel. Bimala who has lived the sheltered life of a Hindu wife in Purdah is brought outside by her husband Nikhilesh to meet Sandeep. Nikhilesh believes that once Bimala experiences the outside world her love towards him will only grow. Nikhilesh is aware of the risk but is willing to let Bimala experience the euphoria of freedom. While Nikhil symbolises stability, security and wisdom, Sandeep is a volatile impetuous revolutionary who threatens Bimala's safe world. Bimala is thus shown caught between the two. For Nikhil, the end does not justify the means: For Sandip it is the reverse, where end justifies the means.

There are 12 chapters in the novel, divided into 25 autobiographical narratives out of which 10 are Bimala's, 8 Nikhil's and 5 Sandip's and Bimala's narration begins and ends the novel. After meeting Sandip, Bimala is suddenly aware of a strong magnetic pull towards him. Sandip crowns Bimala 'Queen Bee'. His teacher and his sister-warn Nikhil in -law about the inherent danger of the developing relationship. Sandeep's photograph nestles close to Nikhil's in Bimala's bedroom and he openly declares his love for Bimala, "The way of retreat is absolutely closed for us" and adds ominously, "We shall despoil each other: get to hate each other; but never more be free" The Home and the World (Macmillan: Rp1967, p.26).
Soon the tension 'within' is reflected in the strife 'outside'. Sandeep fails in active Swadeshi campaign and instead campaigns for burning of foreign garments. For Sandeep all is fair in love and war and he continues to dilute “ten percent of the truth with ninety percent of untruth” (p.138) Nikhil feels that,“to tyrannise for the country is to tyrannise over the country” (p.178) but this view is rejected by Sandeep. Bimala the ‘Queen Bee’ suddenly acquires a glamorous sexual appeal very different from the glorified image of ‘Mother India’ that Sandeep had cast her in. She steals for Sandeep’s cause but quickly realises her folly. Sandeep’s greed and perversion is revealed to her and she learns how he exploits young minds like that of Amulya. Amulya’s idealism and romanticism is in stark contrast to that of Sandeep. Bimala realises that Sandeep is shallow and false:

From a king he fell to level of a boor. Oh, the joy of witnessing his weakness. His snaky coils, with which he used to ensnare me, are exhausted, and I am free (p.239).

Bimala returns to her safe moorings, chastened and repentant. Nikhil is forgiving and ready for reconciliation. But somewhere a death wish lurks within him and he goes out unarmed to quell a riot, and gets seriously wounded. Bimala has to pay a price for her folly. The novel however ends on an enigmatic note. Ray’s conceptualisation of three protagonists is different from that of Tagore. Sandeep is demythised from the very beginning and he comes through as frustrated, desperate parasitic character whose
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greed is evident from his first appearance on screen. Ray's Sandeep clearly seduces Bimla and unscrupulously uses her attraction towards him for his needs. Similarly, Nikhil is portrayed as an unselfish, generous husband who chooses to be a bystander. Ray's Nikhil has no dilemma but is a quiet suffering personality. Ray's Nikhil is saintly and perfect but somehow cannot accept the responsibility for his doing and chooses to die. Bimala seems too ready to be swept away and is punished for her sins in the film with Nikhil dying. However, Ray captures some moments of the novel brilliantly. Bimala's crossing the threshold for the first time is shown is slow motion, a walk down the long corridor, bathed in sunlight falling through stained glass. The viewer is aware that this is a momentous occasion. Elsewhere Nikhil is shown lost in thoughts with a heavy heart, looking outside his bedroom window reflected in a bedroom mirror. The moment captures the poignancy of the situation. Ray very carefully describes the palace, the costume and the sets, which find absolutely no description in the novel. The Indian outfits are in whites and browns while the western outfits are stone studded and in vibrant hues. The 'outside' and 'inside' is very cleverly framed in the film. Ray uses Rabindrasangeet to stamp his film with Tagore's flavour.

Ray has played around with the narrative voices in the novel, though he retains the three narrative voices he introduces the omniscient narration towards the end of the film. He begins the film at the end with Bimala's narrative. By doing that, he prepares his
viewer from an inevitable doom. The fact that a woman's autobiographical account begins a film is a rarity in Indian Cinema. The entire film is in the flashback mode. The two other narrative voices have been accommodated within Bimala's flashback, which is an interesting departure from the norm.

The entire screenplay revolves around Bimala's evolution in the novel. The gradual transition is mapped beautifully in the film. As she gains in confidence, her conversation, her movements in the drawing room get bolder. Her trips 'outside' become frequent. Ray captures other details like the widowed sister-in-law whiling away her time listening to a scratchy gramophone and conversing with her maid. Her eyes chart every movement of Bimala and hence substitutes the viewer's gaze. Bimala is shown engaged in needlework or setting her wardrobe in order and such details show the otherwise mundane life of Bimala. Bimala keeps looking at herself in the mirror now and then and the viewer along with Bimala watches her newly acquired persona.

The film Ghare Baire by Satyajit Ray is more of a love story than a struggle between opposing values. Ray perceived it -'as three characters caught in a fateful triangle.' There is barely a Para taken from the Bengali novel as dialogues for the film. The film Ghare Baire should be treated as a new work of art altogether, a transcreation that uses the novel as a take off point for Ray's directorial interpretation. Tagore disliked Sandeep, Ray hates him.
He reduces him to a cheap performer who sings love songs and patriotic songs in the same breath. Ray chose his favorite actor Soumitra Chatterjee to play the role. The viewers felt Soumitra should have played Sandeep because in popular imagination, Soumitra carried the baggage of a suave, charming gentleman and Victor Bannerjee is deeply inscribed in the viewer's psyche as a good looking, arrogant seducer. Ray by doing the opposite violated popular images. Sandeep breaks into songs in the film, 'Bidhir Bidhan kat te Hobe Tumi Emon Shaktiman' – in popular playback singer Kishore Kumar's voice. It is interesting to note how meaning gets constituted here. A certain section of Bengalis considered that Kishore singing Rabindrasangeet was a blasphemy, but Satyajit Ray plays on that bias and uses Kishore's voice to perhaps demystify Sandeep's persona of a firebrand Swadeshi.

Ray has not been kind to Bimala too. He punishes her severely perhaps even more harshly than Tagore. She loses her husband in the film even having passed through fire. All the three times she is kissed by her lover or her husband, her face is either in shadows or is blocked by the husband or the lover. They embrace her with their backs turned to the camera. In the film every time Bimala crosses the threshold –she is shown in a long shot—as if the camera constitutes the spectator in such a manner that, they have a ringside view of Bimala's journey to the outside world. But Ray makes her heroine aware that she would be punished and she cries out in frustration- 'I knew I would be punished'. She is too keenly
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aware that crossing the threshold is inherently an act of transgression. Nikhil takes the ringside view and keeps lamenting his loss and when the truth dawns upon him, he goes and gets himself killed. Andrew Robinson says in *Inner Eye* that Ray begins the film in the end and we know Bimala is doomed, predestined to lose her love even before she crosses the threshold. In the novel, Bimala crosses the threshold even before Nikhil takes her by the hand.

In the novel, when Sandeep speaks to the Swadeshi’s in the Natmandir, Bimala who is watching him from behind the screen impetuously removes the screen and their eyes meet however nothing of that happens in the film. However, she is later shown singing a Vaishnava love song while holding Sandeeps photograph to have a closer look. In the last scene, the camera moves from her frontal image to look outside a window to frame a procession winding its way to the house. Bimala on the right side of the frame keeps looking straight at the camera while her image metamorphoses in a series of dissolves –from that of a figure draped in a red saree and a bindi to a short haired white saree clad figure. Her unbroken gaze is disturbing she does not even look at the procession as if banished from the world outside forced to look inside.

Various details in the plot have been played around with. Amulya dies and Nikhil has a head injury. Amulya’s characterisation
improves in the film a significant minor character while a significant
minor character Panchu disappears. Again in the film Sandeep
enters Nikhil and Bimala's bedroom, invading a private space and
flaunts Bimala's hairpin to insinuate an intimacy that Nikhil is not
aware of. Bimala breaks down. Nikhil gives her a violent kiss again
in shadows as if unable to look at her and the truth that stares him
in the face and literally escapes the truth he had always
worshipped. The subtitles just like the footnotes in the translated
text constitute yet another subtext. A few words in random have
been chosen to show how that happens:

**Voiceover on the Sound Track**

- Rajparivar
- Sunyami Purush
- Pater Bibi

(means beautiful-refers to portraits of women especially of a particular class).

- Nat Mandir

(a place to assemble during religious festival)

**Subtitle**

- noble family
- Gentle Disposition
- Lucky one
- Quadrangle.

Absence of subtitles also constitutes a text. When Miss Gilby is hurt
and is narrating her grief to Nikhil, Bimala's soliloquy can be heard
on the soundtrack, *'I was not destined to be a memsahib'* a heavily
nuanced sentence. Bimala is laughing at the earnest efforts of her
husband to civilize her but the subtitles are quiet on the issue so
the soliloquy literally remains a soliloquy for the non Bengali
viewer. *Ghare Baire* then in Wagner's terms is both a *Transposition* and a *Commentary* because it not only authentically recreates the source text but also operates as cinematic footnote to the source text. The cinematic adaptations we shall see how invariably fail to get compartmentalised into neat little critical categories. Even if we consider Dudley Andrew's expanded categories of adaptation to the film adaptations under review, we would find that it *Borrows, Intersects and Transforms* simultaneously and the element of fidelity, correspondence, interpretation and criticism operates in various permutations and combinations.

**The Bostonians**

**Filmography:**

- **Release**: UK. 1984 Colour
- **Director**: James Ivory
- **Running Time**: 122 mins
- **Screenplay**: Ruth Prawer Jhabvala (Based on the novel by Henry James).
- **Producer**: Ismail Merchant.
- **Setting**: 19th Century Boston, Massachussets
- **Costume Design**: Jenny Beavan, John Bright
- **Musical Score**: Richard Robbins
- **Editor**: Mark Potter
- **Set Designer**: Richard Elton
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Cast:

- Verena Tarrant : Madeleine Potter
- Olive Chancellor : Vanessa Redgrave
- Basil Ransom : Christopher Reeve
- Miss Birdseye : Jessica Tandy
- Dr. Prance : Linda Hun
- Henrietta Stackpole : Maura Moynihan.

Ruth Prawer Jhabvala the screenplay writer of the triumvirate Merchant-Ivory-Jhabvala always wanted to write the screenplay for *The Portrait of a lady* but never got the opportunity. She however wrote screenplays for three other Jamesian novels, *The Europeans*, *The Bostonians* and the most formidable of all *The Golden Bowl*. Merchant-Ivory have almost become synonymous with Jamesian adaptations and that is why Jane Campion's rendering of *The Portrait of a Lady* was viewed as an invasion by an alien, challenging the monopoly established by Merchant-Ivory. Her film adaptation naturally had to be very different from the Merchant-ivory brand of Henry James.

Merchant-Ivory have very effortlessly conjured up stylised images of Edwardian England replete with stiff upper lips, effete aristocrats and young women confined by corsets and repressed desires. *The Bostonians* a satiric novel, by Henry James however was set in New England and filled with the sexual politics of the later twentieth century America. James had very carefully sketched the Boston
Brahmins who were eccentric rather than staid figures as portrayed in the film version. He caricatures Brook Farm socialists for their radical theories about sex, Harvard Medical School Physicians, with their ether parties and interests in mesmerism, the faith healers and finally the Boston abolitionists, with their fanatic moral fervour that stoked the suffragette movement with a religious passion. The novel has a strong undercurrent of sex and social climbing which the Merchant-Ivory-Jhabvala team assiduously avoided in the film.

Henry James' *The Bostonians*, which deals with feminists and reformers in Boston after the Civil War, is about the stiff upper crust Back Bay spinster, Olive Chancellor, her high strung nerves and unconscious lesbianism. She adopts a vibrant young inspirational speaker Verena Tarrant who is already under her mesmerist father's domination. Olive wishes to use Verena's gifted oratory for furthering her own ideology of 'Women's Liberation'. Basil Ransom, a Southerner and a cousin of Olive bored by his opulent life style and his "proper" friends is fascinated by Verena and her cause. Basil Ransom a thorough bred chauvinist threatens the idyll word of Verena and Olive by wooing Verena. The battle royal ensues, a Suffragette battling a Southerner for the soul of a naive young woman. Olive convinces Verena to leave her faith healer father, and join her in Boston. Ransom pursues Verena from city to city, till he forces her to elope with him just before her momentous speech for the cause of women.
The film manages to convey the themes of feminism and friendship among women and sisterhood in 19th Century Boston. The characters of Olive and Ransom are a study in contrasts and their confrontation is portrayed well in the film. Lavish sets and detailed costumes recreate the period feel effectively. The sets from Harvard College to Manhattan drawing rooms to rustic Martha's vineyard are impeccably captured on celluloid. While Olive's role played by Vanessa Redgrave is that of a possessive, almost neurotic spinster, Christopher Reeve beautifully captures the ambiguous character of Ransom, who for the viewer is a romantic suitor with chauvinist leanings.

The soundtrack of the film has been interestingly used. The film begins with a visual of an organ being played, which immediately establishes the mood of the film. Since the organ plays a piece of concert music and the accompanying visual shows the deft coordination of hand and feet on the organ as the credits roll, the viewer knows that it is going to be a high brow, serious and sombre film. We see a similar organ playing at the end of the film where the situation reaches a climax with Verena failing to make her appearance in the Music hall to address a mammoth audience. The organ music thus literally provides the Prologue and the Epilogue to the film.

When Ransom visits Verena at Olive's house, his approach is announced with a marching tune on the soundtrack as if to
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indicate an invasion and a battle about to commence. This marching tune gets repeated again in the end when Verena elopes and Olive is forced to take the podium. Sound has been used intelligently elsewhere in the film. For instance at the boarding house in New York where Olive confronts Verena for having met Ransom against her warnings, the boarding house bell for lunch is rung at a high pitch as if on a symbolic cue from Olive. When Olive takes up Verena's education, a collage of shots is shown where the two women are seen visiting museums and monuments together and the soundtrack plays Olive's recitation from various Literary Classics. Again when Ransom visits Verena, Verena is shown getting dressed in hurry and all her excitement and anticipation finds an echo in the soundtrack where a playful piece of music is heard.

Olive's obsession with Verena has been fore grounded in the film. Everytime Verena meets Ransom, Olive embraces Verena passionately. Verena's commitment to Olive's cause is a mere facade, both women know that their commitment is towards each other and Ransom is seen as a threat. The two women are shown desperately clinging to each other like lovers against the backdrop of a wild sea, and again in a darkened room. The visuals of a physical intimacy that these women
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share once again shift the focus of James' novel where the tone is one of satire. James' delineation of relationship among women is one of the many idiosyncrasies of the Boston elite that James highlights. Merchant-Ivory views the film once again as a period piece where the classic triangle in its inverted form provides the focus of interest. Miss Birdseye's characterisation in the film lacks the Jamesian pungency. She appears as a dear old spinster who furthers Ransom's romantic interest in Verena without realising his real motives. The pathetic nobility, which James both admires and laughs at in the novel, fails to concretise in the film.

The visual text in the film very eloquently portrays Olive's passion for Verena and her fear of losing Verena. The backdrop of sea gets repeated in the film thrice and every time a new scene of passion unfolds in that setting. It is in the backdrop of a choppy sea that Verena clings to Olive and promises lifelong devotion to the cause, it is once again the same setting where Verena embraces Ransom in admission of her love for him. In the third instance, we see Olive's lone figure placed against the evening sea with the setting sun in the backdrop. Olive, who thinks she has lost Verena, hallucinates about Verena's dead body floating on the seashore. The camera visualises a potent sexual imagery where images of passion and death prevail side by side and reveals the intense emotions that Olive harbours for Verena.
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The introduction of Henrietta Stackpole at the end of the film is an interesting example of intertextuality. Henrietta Stackpole is a character from, *The Portrait of a Lady*, the journalist friend of Isabel Archer, the protagonist. Henrietta is shown again as a newspaper reporter asking questions on Verena's escape from the Music Hall lecture. Her addition in this film can be seen as an ongoing commentary on the evolution of the New Woman. Henry James himself was engaged in this debate while portraying Isabel, Verena, Olive, Henrietta, and Dr. . Prance. Henrietta's character reaches a completion this film. She is shown as an ineffectual, emancipated companion of Isabel who cannot guide her friend to safety and security in tradition bound Europe. She is in a way an observer, a female counterpart of Winterbourne (a character from Henry James’ novella *Daisy Miller*) who will merely watch, as the women protagonists of Jamesian novels take a plunge for the worse. Henrietta Stackpole is almost trapped in her role of a reporter to report once again about a woman who chooses self-negation in place of self-expansion. The Henrietta Stackpole of *The Bostonians* is an amalgamation of her two earlier portrayals, once by James and the other by Jane Campion in her film, *The Portrait of a Lady*.

The three film adaptations based on three novels are all period films. These film versions shed light on different dimensions of adaptation. The same author meets a different treatment in the hands of Jane Campion and Merchant Ivory. While Jane Campion treats Henry James' work as a feminist dialogue, Merchant Ivory
decides to re-work *The Bostonians* not as a film on Women Suffragettes in the 1880’s Boston but as a love triangle. This perhaps suggests that any text can generate an infinity of readings and hence adaptations. Adaptation as ‘reading of the source novel’ is a popular dimension of adaptation theory. Adaptation theory has host of other tropes—translation, dialogization, cannibalisation, transmutation, transfiguration and signifying. A reading could also be a critique. For example in Satyajit Ray’s film version of Tagore’s *The Home and the World* the character of Nikhilesh appears as that of an ineffectual romantic. Ray is perhaps critiquing Tagore’s Nikhil who almost loses his wife in pursuit of a vague romanticism. Ray is not so complementary about Nikhil as Tagore is. Ray portrays Sandeep’s greed, lasciviousness in bold colours and so are Bimala’s failings and her frivolous love affair. Here the critique is in the realm of characterisation, however the critiquing can be carried out in various other ways.

Some novels get adapted over and over again. Madame Bovary according to Robert Stam has been adapted at least nine times, in countries as diverse as France, Portugal, U.S.A. India and Argentina. The Hindi film version, entitled *Maya Memsaab* (illusion) not only envisions Bovary in Hindu philosophical terms but also links Emma’s romanticism, to the conventions of Bombay musical. Robert Stam suggests that adaptations can take an activist stance towards their source novels by inserting them into much broader
*Intertextual dialogism.* Intertextual dialogism refers to the infinite and open ended possibilities generated by all the discursive practices of a culture, the entire matrix of communicative utterances within which the artistic text is situated which reach the text not only through recognisable influences, but also through a subtle process of dissemination.\(^{40}\)

Film adaptations then can be seen in the context of a source text generating other texts. Film adaptation studies should be able to identify how a film text amplifies, ignores, subverts, transforms or extends the meaning of a source text. The source text gets influenced by the prevalent ideological discourses of the day in its transformation towards a film text. The film adaptation of a novel is also largely dependent on the political constraints, auteurist predilections, charismatic stars and the new technology.
Notes


5. Ibid., pp. 241-242.


7. Ibid, Morrissette.


9. Ibid., p.5.


15. Lester Asheim, “From Book to Film: Summary” *Quarterly of Film Radio Television*, vi.3 (1952),272.


21. Ibid.,p.92.
22. Ibid.,p.95.
28. Ibid., p, 49.
33. Ibid, pp.98-104.
37. Ibid, p.87.
40. Ibid., Robert Stam, The Dialogics Of Adaptation, p.64.