Chapter 3: Adaptation

The relation between films and novels can be best understood through what Joseph Conrad declared as his creative cult: “My task which I am trying to achieve is, by power of the written word, to make you hear, to make you feel- it is, before all to make you see.” The statement that Conrad gave in relation to his art of novel writing sums up the errand of a film as well. A film makes us hear what is written in words, a film makes us feel what runs through the novel and before all, a film makes us see. Bluestone has beautifully summed up the relation between the two forms of art. He opines that the phrase “to make you see” assumes an affective relationship between creative artist and receptive audience. Novelist and director meet here in a common intention. One may, on the other hand, see visually through the eye or imaginatively through the mind. And between the percept of the visual image and the concept of the mental image lies the root difference between the two media (Bluestone 1).

D.W. Griffith, who had adapted Tolstoy’s Resurrection (1909), has also made similar claim regarding his cinematic cult- “The task I’m trying to achieve is above all to make you see” (Bluestone 1). But Bluestone, at the same time, also makes his readers aware about the difference between two arts though both arts make claims to serve the same errand. He states that Conrad’s ‘you’ is different from Griffith’s. The former is addressing the middle-class educated readers and the latter, the masses.

Though the two art forms, seemingly serving the same purpose, have different targets to aim. Yet there is a close affinity between two art forms. Since the early days of cinema, filmmakers have always relied upon literature for their stories. There are quite a few encouraging statistical figures that speak of a strong affinity between films and novels. To quote Bluestone -

A Sampling from RKO, Paramount, and Universal motion picture output for 1934-35 reveals that about one-third of all full-length
features were derived from novels (excluding short stories). Lester Asheim’s more comprehensive survey indicates that of 5,807 releases by major studios between 1935 and 1945, 976 or 17.2 per cent were derived from novels. Hortense Powdermaker reports, on the basis of Variety’s survey (June 4, 1947) that of 463 screenplays in production or awaiting release, slightly less than 40 per cent were adapted from novels (Bluestone 3).

Moreover, in the early days of cinema, George Méliès’s film *A Trip to the Moon* (1902) also had its connection with Jules Verne’s novel. Even D.W. Griffith, one of the earliest filmmakers who is also credited with ‘inventing Hollywood,’ based his movies on poems, short stories, plays and novels. Though he was getting his stories from popular tradition, he was evidently more read than most of his followers and is said to have arrived on the set each day carrying one or another of Dicken’s novels - also frequently made use of classics. He adapted Tennyson in *Enoch Arden*, Browning in *Pippa Passes*, Thomas Hood in *The Song of the Shirt*, Jack London in *The Call of the Wild*, and, in *The Cricket on the Hearth*, his beloved Dickens, whose work is greatly credited with inspiring the innovations- the use of the close-ups, parallel editing, montage, and even the dissolve-which helped earn Griffith the epithet “father of film technique” (Boyum 3).

Adaptation grew as a serious artistic venture as early as 1908 when Société Film d’ Art was formed in France. The purpose of the company was to translate “prestigious literary works to the screens, mostly drama but also novels” (Boyum 4). The Italians were, however, attracted towards historical works such as Edgar Bulwer-Lytton’s *The Last Days of Pompeii* and Henrik Sienkiewicz’s *Quo Vadis*; and in India, early cinematic works were inspired from mythology and legends. The first film in the history of Indian cinema was based on the life of Raja Harishchandra, a story in which Gods and humans equally participated.

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16 In Marguerite G. Ottman, *Fiction and the Screen* (Boston, 1935)
17 In Lester Asheim, “From Book to Film” (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Chicago, 1949)
Since the purport of cinema also is to tell stories, so its falling back on the masterpieces of literature can be easily understood as literary masterpieces were giving filmmakers accepted and respected plots and characters. This could be the reason why the adaptations have always bagged Academy Awards. To name a few are- *Wuthering Heights* (1939), *The Way of the Flesh* (1927), *A Farewell to Arms* (1932), *Pygmalion* (1938), *Hamlet* (1948), *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1935), *Henry V* (1989), *Romeo and Juliet* (1968), *The Grapes of Wrath* (1940), *Great Expectations* (1946), *Sons And Lovers* (1960), *Zorba the Greek* (1964), *Apocalypse Now* (1979), *Tess* (1980), *Tom Jones* (1963) and many others. How strongly literature has fascinated filmmaker in different periods of time can be guessed from the fact that some of these works have been once again adapted by new filmmakers in the recent history. E.g. *Hamlet* was made in 1996 by Kenneth Branagh, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* has been done into a film by Michael Hoffman in 1999, Laurence Olivier has made *Henry V* (1996), Baz Luhrman made *Romeo + Juliet* in 1996, Alfonso Cuarón made *Great Expectations* in 1998, Stephen Whittaker made *Sons And Lovers* in 2003.

Even in Indian popular cinema, we find there are many successful films which are based on either Indian literature or English literary works. *Devdas*, a novel by Sharatchandra has inspired various filmmakers of India. We find three cinematic versions of *Devdas* in Hindi made by Bimal Roy (1955), P.C. Barua (1935) and Sanjay Leela Bhansali (2002); one in Tamil by P.V. Rao (1936), one in Bangla by Dilip Roy (1979) and one in Malyalam by Ownbelt Mani (1989) each. Similarly, *Parineeta*, based on Sharatchandra’s story, has been done into a film by Pashupati Chatterji (1942), Bimal Roy (1953), Ajoy Kar (1963) and Pardeep Sarkar (2005). *Guide* (1965) is based on R.K. Narayan’s novel; Satya Jit Ray’s *Pather Panchali* (1955) is based on Bibhuti Bhushan Bannerji’s novel; Adoor Gopalakrishnan’s film *Mathilukal* (1989) is based on Vaikam Mohmad Basheer’s novel; *Dil Diya Dard Liya* (1966) a famous Hindi film is inspired from *Wuthering Heights*, a famous English novel; Satya Jit Ray’s *Shatranj Ke Khilari* (1977) is based on a short story by Prem Chand; another Hindi film *Maya Mem Saab* (1992) made by Ketan Mehta is based on a French classic *Madame Bovary*; *Samskara* (1970), a Kannada film is based on U. R. Ananthamurthy’s novel; *Balidan* (1927) is
based on Rabindranath Tagore’s play; *Marhi Da Deeva* (1989), a Punjabi film is based on a Punjabi novel written by Gurdyal Singh. Though literature has always been inspiring filmmakers to make films on literature, according to Shoma A. Chatterji there can be various reasons for the motivation apart from the fact that it gives the filmmaker an acclaimed plot. The various factors for motivation could be one, because the filmmaker likes the story and wants to tell in his way; two, “he wishes to adapt because he believes the story lends itself beautifully to the medium of film” (Chatterji 30); three, the filmmaker wants to give personal interpretation of the story; four, “he wishes to re-interpret the story by relocating it in terms of time, space, place etc.” (Chatterji 30); five, he wants to take up the challenge of making a period film; six, the filmmaker feels that the story cannot be told in cinematic medium and takes up the challenge and finally seven, the filmmaker may have ideological reasons as the story in literature reflects his own ideology and he wants to use the film medium to “convey this ideology to his audience” (Chatterji 30).

If adaptation finds its supporters in filmmakers and viewers, it also has its critics who “come from the ranks of neither moviemakers nor ordinary moviegoers but of academics, theorists, and latter-day critics” (Boyum 5). Despite the fact that filmmakers have always been banking upon literature for their stories, there has been an endless debate over the worth of adaptation. Critics and creative writers have been expressing their views strongly for and against adaptation. Virginia Woolf herself was very much against movies, mainly because she found movies as a threat to books. Alain Resnais has also expressed his views, as quoted by Boyum, “I would not want to shoot the adaptation of a novel because...to make a film of it is a little like reheating a meal” (Boyum 6).

One strong reason for the prejudice against film adaptation could be seen in culture-war that started in 1950s and 60s. Immediately after the Second World War, with the growth in television, the defenders of traditional form of art and culture began to panic. The visual media, which became extremely popular, was seen as a threat to the books and so were the films. Culture was divided into sharp categories such as highbrow and lowbrow; avant-garde and kitsch; art and entertainment. “The aesthetics of the popular culture were explored, the effects of mass culture were investigated” (Boyum 6). Films were seen as a source of
entertainment, not art and adaptation was considered as a way of promoting a work of art meant only for educated readers among the masses and cater to their uncultured sensibilities to entertain them. Boyum sums up Arendt’s views on this controversy:

It is regarded here that the gold of art is transformed into dross of entertainment, and refined, legitimate culture is pummelled into its vulgar mass form. The biases underlying this view are hard to miss: that a work of literature (or anything truly worthy of the name) is by definition a work of complexity and quality which is addressed to an educated elite; that movies, in contrast, are mere entertainment, directed at anyone and everyone, and to adapt a book to film is thus of necessity to adjust it, not so much to its new medium as to its audience. That is, to the uneducated, undifferentiated mass… (Boyum 8).

But the critics of visual media of those times failed to take note of the great leap that cinema was taking as an art form. It was after the World War-II that the Italian Neo-Realism and French New Wave developed. These two cinema movements have given to the world the best of cinematic works so far in the history of world cinema. The films made in these two movements still work as touchstone to measure the worth of any film. These films were complex in the sense literature is considered to be and also catered to the sensibility of sensitive and intelligent film viewer. They had every element of art and were dubbed as ‘art films.’

Another reason for prejudice against adaptation of novels into film could be that novels are written in words and films primarily use images to communicate. No doubt, dialogues also constitute a very important part of film narration, but one should never forget that films, in earlier times, were silent and relied completely on images for narration. Thus, there is a primary difference in the signs used in these two different mediums for telling stories. Perhaps, critics feel that what words can say, images can’t. In order to strengthen their argument they quote beginnings of two different novels which, according to them, are difficult to translate into cinematic medium with fidelity. The quotes are - “Happy families are all alike; every unhappy family is unhappy in its own way” and “It is a truth universally
acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune, must be in want of a wife.” Their argument is how a film would make such statements as made in the openings of *Anna Karenina* and *Pride and Prejudice* respectively. Since films bank upon images, sound and other cinematic techniques to make statements, they cannot state anything as overtly as has been done in the beginning of these novels. Words in novels, to use terminology of semiology, are signs which do not have any meaning in themselves. They communicate only through conventional agreement. Images, on the other hand, are direct and are like ‘icons’; they stand for what they represent. Cinematic signs are specific. It is the specificity of cinematic signs that acts as a stumbling block in the way of a faithful cinematic translation of words. Words are connected to each other following the rules of grammar to make sentences or meaningful utterances. Film, on the other hand, has no such fixed grammar. No doubt, as discussed in the previous chapter, films also have their own conventions of using different types of camera angles and shots but filmmakers, using their poetic licence in films, have always been deviating from the rules to use camera in their idiosyncratic ways to convey their subjective meanings to the viewers. In the process of adaptation

It is ... the specificity of two signifying systems is at stake. Generally film is found to work from perception toward signification, from external facts to interior motivations and consequences, from the givenness of a world to the meaning of a story cut out of that world. Literary fiction works oppositely. It begins with signs (graphemes and words) building to propositions which attempt to develop perception. As a product of human language it naturally treats human motivation and values, seeking to throw them out onto the external world, elaborating a world out of a story (Dudley 456).

No doubt the two mediums are highly sign specific and on the surface, it seems that these two sign systems have no common meeting point, yet intelligent filmmakers have used film’s mode of communication so innovatively and effectively that what a novel takes pages to describe, a filmmaker has said more with the help of cinematic mode of communication. Shoma A. Chatterji quotes Gaston Roberge in the essay ‘Aesthetics of Film Adaptation’-
There are passages of literature, novels and plays which are rethought by filmmaker and rendered in cinematic terms. A beautiful example of such re-creation is the opening sequences of Satyajit Ray’s *Charulata* which cinematizes in a few minutes of screen time several pages of Tagore’s novelette *Nastineer*. In one relatively short sequence, you come to know a lot about Cahru, a knowledge which in real life, might take quite some time to arrive at. But then, it is one of art’s functions to condense life (Chatterji 31).

It is owing to the creative use of cinematic devices at the hands of a few intelligent filmmakers that the language of cinema has also grown vastly. In the early years of cinema, camera was only used as a tool to capture the outside reality; but great filmmakers like Eisenstein, Godard, Antonioni, Coppola, Fellini, Kurasawa, Satyajit Ray, Adoor Gopalakrishnan have played an important role in developing the language of cinema in their respective times and countries and have established film as a narrative art. How cinema also creates tropes like synecdoche, metonymy, metaphor and simile has already been discussed in the previous chapter. At the same time, critics and semioticians like Barret, Boyum, Battestin, Chatman, Cohen, Horton, Klein, Mast, Peary, Richardson, Simon and Wagner contemplated over the language and rhetoric of cinema and made the world acquainted with theoretical, communicative and creative potency of the film medium. It is because of such filmmakers and thinkers that P. Shiv Kumar could opine that:

the language of film, like that of literature, also involves the process of conceptual cognition and decoding; film too exploits the denotative and connotative uses of its language whose main constituent is image; and the film’s narrative strategies, the deployment of devices of ambiguity, irony, symbolism, metaphor, etc., the psychological probing, not to speak of the plot, characters, setting and dialogue, are also central to it as they are to literature. Quite apart from being an independent medium that comes closest to literature in so many ways, films also perform the function of criticism when they adapt literary work (Kumar 132).
Second, as film generally runs for two to three hours, a filmmaker has limited time at his disposal to tell everything. Owing to the limited nature of films, a filmmaker “has to state or convey whatever he wants to within that time span…” Commercial film cannot reproduce the range of a novel in time. Almost invariably details of incident are lost in the transition from the book to the film” (Sankaranarayanan 47). If a filmmaker is adapting a novel into a film, he makes very subjective choices while selecting and deleting events from the novel. At the same time, in the history of cinema, there had been filmmakers who had preferred to adapt a novel into a film letter by letter, but they have failed to produce good cinema. In S. Theodore Baskaran’s opinion “these filmmakers may not create a film of their own, very sensitive craftsmen though they may be. They are just good adapters” (Baskaran 56). *Heart of Darkness* (1994) by Nicolas Roeg is a faithful adaptation of the novel by Joseph Conrad, but another film *Apocalypse Now* (1979) by Francis Ford Coppola based on the same novel is not a ‘faithful adaptation,’ but a successful film. This makes the study of adaptation an interesting venture in itself. The questions that arise in one’s mind are- Is this selection governed by the director’s or scriptwriter’s whims? Does the film as an independent medium of creative expression also govern its work? Or is it the economics of the film making, distributing and viewing that control the nature of work? Perhaps it is because of the demands of film medium that when Peter Lorre wanted to do a film on *Crime and Punishment*, he was asked to give one-page synopsis of the book. He paid somebody 50 dollars to do one-page synopsis of the book and it read like an old-fashioned thriller. Filmmakers have been changing the source books to suit their artistic and commercial needs. This gives birth to a very important debate of fidelity in adaptation. “Discussion of adaptation has been bedevilled by the fidelity issue…” (MacFarlane 8). Ever since films are made on books and Bluestone’s work on the theory of adaptation, which is supposed to be the first ever book on adaptation, different thinkers and critics have been deliberating on the issue of fidelity. Since both the mediums are governed by their respective artistic conventions, it is almost impossible to say everything in a film that has been said in a novel and at the same time, it is more difficult is to say the way it is said in the novel. When a novel is adapted into a film, possibilities are that film may adopt a new narrative structure to
tell the same story. It is likely to adopt a new way of telling the same story as films communicate through different signs, it may also alter the story a bit to suit demands of film as a different medium and at the end, the meaning of the film may also be changed. Thus, the roots of the prejudice against the adaptation seem to lie in the different nature of film medium and signs it uses to communicate even the same reality.

But Robert Stam in the book edited by himself and Alessandra Raengo has attempted to trace the roots of prejudice against adaptation. He begins with quoting various adjectives used for and in relation with adaptations such as- “infidelity,” “deformation,” “violation,” “bastardisation,” “vulgarization,” and “desecration.” Studying the complexion of their meanings and cultural overtones, he states:

Each word carrying its specific charge of opprobrium. “Infidelity” carries overtones of Victorian prudishness; “betrayal” evokes ethical perfidy; “bastardization” connotes illegitimacy; “deformation” implies aesthetic disgust and monstrosity; “violation” calls to mind sexual violence; “vulgarization” conjures up class degradation; and “desecration” intimates religious sacrilege and blasphemy (Stam 3).

Continuing his argument, he also states that there is always a lamentable sense of loss associated with adaptation. He also adds that critics never try to look at what has been gained; rather they want to look at what has been lost in the process of adaptation of the novel. Thinking like a structuralist, he finds the roots of prejudice against adaptation in the complex cultural matrix in which one grows. Studying the Western or Christian sensibility, he goes into the religion and mythology of the Western civilization to understand the roots of prejudice. The first roots of prejudice that he designates pertain to “substratal prejudices” (Stam 4) in the general way of thinking of the people in which “older arts are necessarily better arts” (Stam 4). Novels or literature being older form of art enjoy more respectable place in the minds than the film which is first, younger than literature and second, it is technology based whereas literature is entirely born in the imagination of the creative person. Ever since the emergence of film on the horizon of art world, films were perceived as a threat to literature because it employs relatively more popular medium of story telling. Even Tolstoy also perceived it as a direct attack on the old
methods of literary art. The struggle between words and images is perceived by Robert Stam as the second cause of prejudice which he calls “dichotomous thinking” in which words are given priority over images. The third cause of prejudice against films, he finds in the “collective unconscious” of the Western civilization. He calls it “iconophobia.”

This deeply rooted cultural prejudice against the visual arts is traceable not only to the Judaic-Muslim-Protestant prohibition of “graven images,” but also to the Platonic and Neoplatonic depreciation of the world of phenomenal appearance. The *locus classicus* of this attitude is in the Second Commandment forbidding the making of idols in the form of anything in heaven above or on earth beneath or in the waters below (Stam 5).

In Christianity as well as in Islam, idol worship is prohibited as both the religions believe that God is formless and they give importance to the sound- the word of God. This implants a prejudice against the idol or icon. But Christianity became relatively open to the visuals than Islam. The one reason, according to my understanding, can be traced in the history of art in the West. Even Christianity long before displayed acceptance of visual form of art by allowing paintings of biblical stories done on the walls of the churches. But when film took birth as a form of art, it did not begin with portrayal of biblical stories or religious material, as in the case of Indian cinema which fell back on mythology and history for stories. The first film, rather, attempted to show incidents from day-to-day life like workers coming out of a factory or a train arriving at the station. Films’ beginning its career on ‘secular’ agenda could be a cause that the Christian society of the nineteenth century could not respect films. At the same time, it was perceived as an art form of the masses not of the intellectual or artistic elites, the place literature had been enjoying since the days of Chaucer and Shakespeare.

Even thinkers and philosophers have also been adding to the fear of icon in the minds of people since ages. Plato’s reasons for keeping literature out from his Republic apply to films as well. Interestingly, cinema hall in which artificial light falling from behind make few shadows move on the screen is quite analogous to Plato’s ‘cave’ in which a source of light makes a few shadows move on the wall.
Ironically, within Platonic view the allure of the spectacle allures the reason and digresses it. Frederick Jameson feels that cinema is “essentially pornographic” and in Lacanian terms, the filmic sign or signifier is a threat to the symbolic word order in which literature operates. Thus the roots of rivalry between words and images have been found in culture and the tradition of critical thinking as well.

Another cause of the prejudice, which Rober Stam finds, is related to the priority of words over images. Rober Stam calls it logophilia which, according to him, is a form of “valorization of the verbal, typical of cultures rooted in the sacred word of the ‘religions of the book’” (Stam 6). People belonging to a discipline such as History, Literature or Anthropology does not like films based on their discipline as they tend to venerate words more than images. The fifth prejudice, according to Stam, is anti-corporeality. Those who are critical about cinema as such criticise cinema on the grounds that it “offends through its inescapable materiality, its carnated, fleshy, enacted characters, its real locales and palpable props, its carnality and visceral shocks to the nervous system” (Stam 6). According to them, every thing which can be seen is ‘obscene.’ They argue that novels are visualised in the screen of mind whereas films give us figures moving almost in their flesh and blood. Books are assimilated by minds whereas cinema screens are, as suggested by Virginia Woolf, licked up with the eyes. What Virginia Woolf criticises is voyeurism in cinema.

Since films are made with the help of technological equipments, it also results in hostility in the minds of those who believe it is no art to capture an available material with the help of a camera and reproduce the same with the help of a projector. Rober Stam calls it “myth of facility.” Such persons also think that it takes no brain to understand a film. Robert Stam answers them as-

On the reception side, it ignores the intense perceptual and conceptual labor- the work of iconic designation, visual deciphering, narrative inference, and construction- inherent in film. Like novels of complexity, films too bear “rereading,” precisely because so much can be missed in a single viewing. That is also why we can see a film like Hitchcock’s *Rear Window* (1954), also an adaptation, over and
over, long after the “suspense” has faded, for the music-like beauty of its forms (Stam 7).

His seventh source of hostility towards cinema is rooted in the class prejudice in which cinema was regarded as a source of entertainment for low-class vulgar or crude people, and literature is associated with educated and cultured minds. The dichotomy between high and low literature works more strongly in the case of rivalry between books and films. Films are regarded as a ‘low art form’ of and for the low class people; whereas books are regarded as ‘high art form.’

And, finally, the films are supposed to thrive at the cost of books and hence, films are seen as parasitical on literature. The prejudice of parasitism promotes most of the people to blame films for draining out or damaging the ‘spirit’ of the book while adapting it. Such people don’t understand that films and books are two different and independent art forms and would tell even the same story following the conventions of their respective art forms. It is almost impossible to say everything in two or three hours that a book says in 300 or 500 pages. Certain amount of “distortion and desecration” (Boyum 64) of the book is inevitable. A book or novel gives a writer enough freedom to let his imagination go wild and say all that he wants to through images, metaphors, long descriptive pauses or judgemental comments on characters; whereas film, circumscribed by its own conventions, cannot say everything as overtly as a novel can. That is why sometimes when the best of novels are adapted into films, the latter have turned out to be disappointing and films based on novels of ordinary literary worth have given some of the best films to the world. For example, Truffaut’s Shoot the Piano Player (1962) which is based on David Goodis’s slick crime novel Down There is a better film than The Green Room (1978) inspired from Henry James’s work and similarly, Viscontti’s Ossessione (1943) adapted from James M. Cain’s The Postman Always Rings Twice is a better film than the film based on Albert Camus’s work The Stranger. Since adaptation is also a creative process; sometimes, a good novel does not give a filmmaker much freedom to make his choices about retaining and deleting material from the palimpsest. What a filmmaker wants to tell in his film based on a novel is a highly subjective decision that the filmmaker makes. We, as viewers, can only look at the product when it is screened before us. We cannot delve into the mind of the
The difficulties that a filmmaker has to face while adapting a novel into a film can be understood at two levels- first, the origin of two art forms and second, the difference in the nature of language these two different mediums use. The rise of novel, in the English tradition, is seen in the eighteenth century with the rise of middle class in the English society. The emerging class getting money and education was emulating the ways of the nobles. It became matter of vanity with the *nouveau riche* and educated women. Novel was accepted as a new literary form; but it was meant for the elite or educated people only. Whereas The origins of film, according to Panofsky, suggest two fundamental implications. First, that the ‘primordial basis of the enjoyment of moving pictures was not an objective interest in a specific matter, but the sheer delight in the fact that things *move.’ … The second fact we are to understand, Panofsky goes on, is that films... are originally a product of a genuine folk-art. At the very beginning of things we find the simple recording of movement, galloping horses, railroad trains, fire-engines, sporting events, street scenes. And these films were originally produced by people who did not claim to be artists, and were enjoyed by people who did not claim to be artists, and who would have been much offended had anybody called them art-lovers (Bluestone 6-7).

This primary difference in the origin of these two known art forms determined their functions vis-à-vis their respective societies and also their structures. Novel was a new literary genre and in the nineteenth century, it soon reached the pinnacle of performance, in Arnold’s terms, the higher function of “criticism of life.” Films, on the other hand, grew in the hands of industrialists who were fascinated by new engineering device called camera and were investing money in the development of cameras not because they could anticipate a new emerging art form in the horizon, but because of their sheer whim and fancy. Even when motion pictures were being produced, the filmmaker had least right over the product he had created. Films were owned by the studios like MGM that were screening them.
These studios were always tempering with the actual product to suit their commercial needs. Films, in the early years, were considered as a product meant for making money; rather than for making artistic statements. The subjects on which early films were made happened to be: 1) melodramatic situations, 2) crudely comic incidents and 3) “scene represented on pornographic postcards” (Bluestone 7) which gave the films its three basic genres tragedy, comedy and romance respectively.

Another major difficulty we encounter while apprehending novels and films in terms of aesthetics is in relation to the epistemology. In a novel, visual images are constructed with the help of words. While reading a novel, a reader makes a sense of the story and also creates a world in his/her imagination which is triggered off by words. In a film, a viewer encounters the images first and then makes a sense of story. “Rudolf Arnheim, the psychologist analysing the film, begins from cognitive premises, Edwin Muir, the critic analyzing the novel, feels compelled to end with them” (Bluestone 8). Another critic named Robert Stam, as quoted by Desmond and Hawkes, opines that it is difficult to translate everything into a film what is said in a novel, because novel is a single-track medium and film is a multitrack medium. Novels are single-track medium because they communicate through words only and films, according to him, have five tracks namely 1. theatrical performance, 2. words, 3. music, 4. sound effects and 5 photographic images (Desmond and Hawkes 36). Since the phenomenon of adaptation involves two different mediums and every adaptation of the same novel can give us unique film, critics have always wondered to classify different ways of adaptation. As quoted by MacFarlane, Wagner gives three possible categories to assess any adaptation:

(a) *transposition*, in which a novel is given directly on the screen with a minimum of apparent interference, (b) *commentary*, where an original is taken and either purposely or inadvertently altered in some respect…when there has been a different intention of the part of the filmmaker, rather than infidelity or outright violation; and (c) *analogy*, which must represents a fairly considerable departure for the sake of making another work of art. The critic, he implies, will have to understand which kind of adaptation he is dealing with if his
commentary on an individual film is to be valuable. (MacFarlane 10-11).

Andrew Dudley also offers a model which roughly corresponds to Wagner’s model. Dudley uses the terms- Borrowing, Intersecting and Transforming Sources. By Borrowing he means when any creative artist borrows plot from any other narrative source. He places Shakespeare’s borrowing plots in this category and calls it the “most frequent mode of adaptation” (Dudley 454). According to him, such kind of adaptation hopes to win audience by the prestige of its borrowed title or subject. But at the same time it seeks to gain a certain respectability, if not aesthetic value, as a dividend in the transaction. Adaptation from literature to music, opera or painting are of this nature. There is no question of the replication of the original in Straus’s Don Quixote. Instead the audience is expected to enjoy basking in a certain pre-established presence and to call up new or especially powerful aspects of a cherished work (Dudley 454).

According to him, the success of such an adaptation is rated according to “fertility not fidelity” (Dudley 454). In ‘borrowing,’ the filmmaker borrows mainly the plot of an important and famous work and appropriates to the artistic and commercial needs of his times. On the contrary, Intersecting is a form of adaptation in which the uniqueness of the original text is maintained and the same flavour is attempted to be transported in the adapted work. The work of one medium is translated into another medium and consequently, the communicating signs of the second medium intersect with the culture of the original text. Such adaptations don’t aim at appropriating the original text, rather they present the otherness and distinctiveness of the original text, initiating a dialectical interplay between the aesthetic forms of one period with the cinematic forms of our own period … an original is allowed its life, its own life, in the cinema. The consequences of this method, despite its apparent forthrightness, are neither innocent or simple. The disjunct experience such intersecting promotes is consonant with the aesthetics of modernisation is all arts (Dudley 455).
Andrew Dudley believes that while studying any adaptation, fidelity is understood in terms of “letter” and “spirit” of the original text. According to him, cinema can venture faithful adaptation of the “letters” but is difficult to transport the spirit of any original text into film as it requires “the systematic replacement of verbal signifiers by cinematic signifiers” (Dudley 456). As quoted already, the specificity of two signifying systems becomes the greatest hurdle in the process of transporting the spirit of any original text. Transformation of the source material of communication in two different mediums is the most difficult target to achieve. It was primarily because of this reason that thinkers like George Bluestone, Jean Mistry and various others find this opposition to be the most difficult to handle in adaptation. “The material of language (graphemes, words and sentences)” do not conform to “the material of cinema (images, projected light and shadows, identifiable sound and forms and represented actions)”…(Dudley 456).

John M. Desmond and Peter Hawkes have also classified types of adaptation into three categories, but in relatively simpler terms- close adaptation, loose adaptation and intermediate adaptation. As their names indicate, close adaptation is one in which “most of narrative elements in the literary text are kept in the film, few elements are dropped, and not many elements are added” (Desmond 44); loose adaptation is one in which “most of the story elements in the film are dropped from the film and most elements in the film are substituted or added” (Desmond 44) and finally intermediate adaptation is one in which “it is in the fluid middle of the sliding scale between close and loose. Some elements of the story are kept in the film, and other elements are dropped, and still more elements are added” (Desmond 44). MacFarlance quotes three categories given by Michael Klein and Gillian Parker. They are-

first, ‘fidelity to the main thrust of the narrative’; second, the approach which ‘retains the core of the structure of the narrative while signifying reinterpreting or, in some cases, deconstructing the source text’; and, third, regarding ‘the source merely as raw material, as simply the occasion for an original work’ (MacFarlane 11).

Model suggested by Michael Klein and Gillian Parker includes the aspect of adaptation as an interpretation of the original text; whereas models suggested by
MacFarlane and Desmond and Hawkers primarily focus on retaining and deleting story elements, but Dudley talks about interaction of two signifying systems in the process of adaptation. Dudley’s perspective includes that novels communicate through words and films primarily through images. While reading a novel, every reader creates his/her own world in his/her imagination; whereas films give you a real world on the screen. If the purpose of words is to create an illusion of reality that the reader deciphers; while watching a film the viewer has to remind himself that what he is watching is not the ‘real’ but that it stands for the real. While reading a novel active imagination is at work and while watching a film aesthetic apprehension is more active as a camera can acquire various positions and angles and can also display various movements. All these possibilities have been discussed in the previous chapter. What is more important to remember is that camera makes statements through various positions, movements and angles. It becomes viewer’s aesthetic responsibility to decipher cinematic language which every common film viewer may not understand; whereas every literate person is acquainted with verbal language, at least with its literal meaning. Though he/she may not be trained in the literary nuances of the verbal language, yet it is easier to decode verbal language than the cinematic language. While reading literature even a lay man is conscious that the work in his hands is of some literary worth and expects creative use of language there. But while watching a film, a lay person hardly expects the filmmaker to make creative cinematic statements. Moreover, the way camera lens sees the world is different from the way human eyes see it. This difference also becomes an obstacle for a lay person to understand films. Bluestone quotes Basil Wright, the British photographer,

First and foremost we must remember that the camera does not see things in the same way as the human eye. The brain behind your eye selects the points of emphasis in the scene before you. You can look at a crowd and see nothing but one umbrella, or you can look at an empty field and see millions of separate blades of grass... Not so the camera. The lens soullessly records on a sensitised piece of celluloid simply the amount of light of differing values that passes through it. No amount of thinking on the part of the cameraman will achieve any
other emphasis. Out of a wide landscape it will not pick out that certain tree. You, as a person, have got to interfere, to place the camera in such a way that the picture it records will somehow give the emphasis you require (Bluestone 17).

This observation that what camera shows is not perfectly real as it is captured from a particular position and angle in order to achieve the desired visual effect defamiliarises the reality and establishes film as an art, though it took filmmakers a good number of years to discover such a use of camera. Initially, camera was placed static at a fixed distanced position and the whole event was captured from that one position. Camera began to narrate when this creative use of camera position and angle along with the magic of editing was discovered by filmmakers. It was in *Enoch Arden* (1911) that D.W. Griffith outperformed his superiors by placing a medium shot with a close-up instead of filming the entire scene from the similar position. Thus, a new code was added in the vocabulary of the film language. Very soon, he was able to discover other uses of camera and editing such as the inter-cut, parallel editing, the flashback, the fade-in and fade-out, the extreme long shot and they all became a part of film language. Lindergren speaks of the role of different techniques of editing to punctuate different shots in a film and also the relation among them:

The normal method of transition from shot to shot within a scene is by means of a cut which gives the effect of one shot being instantly replaced by the next. The normal method of transition from one scene to another is by means of the mix or dissolve which is always associated with a sense of the passage of time or of break in time (Lindgren as quoted by Bluestone 18).

Thus, these techniques of filmmaking and editing eventually became techniques of narration. Where novel has its own ways of giving a sense of time to the readers, films also developed their own grammar. Camera, from a soulless device to record the reality of outside world, became a tool to create its own world and celluloid became the raw material for filmmaker to narrate their stories. After discovering what can be called the language of cinema, the next challenge before the filmmakers was to invent cinematic tropes. As discussed in the previous chapter as
well, cinema developed its own style to make metaphors, similes, synecdoche, metonymy and other figures of speech known in verbal language. James Monaco also comments on this nature of cinematic language:

Cinema is an art and a medium of extensions and indexes. Much of its meaning comes not from what we see (or hear) but from what we don’t see or, more accurately, from an ongoing process of comparison of what we see with what we don’t see. This is ironic, considering that cinema at first glance seems to be art that is all too evident… (Monaco 136).

While developing the difference in the nature between symbolic nature of verbal language and language of images, Bluestone expands Mendilow’s thought that it is easier to decipher cinematic tropes than literary tropes as the latter are written in words and have to be visualised to be understood; whereas the former already exist in the visual form. “The moving picture comes to us directly through perception, language must be filtered through the screen if conceptual apprehension” (Bluestone 20). It is highly dangerous to generalise on the basis of this logic as most of us are trained to ‘read’ literature, not films. Most of the time, people just watch a film and never bother to understand its language. We miscarry ourselves saying that we can understand films because we can ‘see’ them. Perhaps, the old Greek association of visualisation with knowledge (as we all say “I see” when we want to say “I have understood or got the idea”) is working in our subconscious; but Monaco brings our attention to this subtle self-deception in very simple words- “Film is difficult to explain because it is easy to understand” (Monaco 142). To explain, here, is to decode the language of cinema which only a film literate can do. No doubt, film illiterates also take pleasure while watching a film, but a literate is aware of what he is enjoying. An illiterate is carried away by the magic of what is shot; whereas a literate would appreciate how it is shot. To quote Monaco- “Literate filmgoers appreciate Hitchcock’s superb cinematic intelligence on a conscious level, illiterate filmgoers on an unconscious level, but the intelligence has its effect, nevertheless” (Monaco 137). Though films come to us directly, they don’t reach our critical understanding so easily. Both the mediums have their respective ways of handling tropes and generate different responses from readers and viewers. Bluestone quotes
Virginia Woolf who has contrasted novels and films especially in terms of their capability to evoke images and tropes.

Even the simplest image: “my love is like a red, red rose, that’s newly sprung in June,” presents us with impressions of moisture and warmth and the flow of crimson and the softness of petals inextricably mixed and strung upon the lift of a rhythm which is itself the voice of the passion and the hesitation of the love. All this, which is accessible to words, and to words alone, the cinema must avoid.

It is clear from the above quote that Virginia Woolf felt that cinema was not capable of catering to our different senses the way words could inspire human mind to indulge in imaginative comprehension of images in words. The defenders of cinema discard her criticism saying that Woolf was criticising cinema of her times when it was primarily silent and its language was also growing. Her prejudice is essentially against the cinema of her times. With the help of editing, cinema also learned to create tropes the way literature does and cinema “discovered a metaphoric quality of its own” (Bluestone 24). Editing allowed filmmakers to make their selection and rejection of shots according to their artistic plan. The technique of editing touched new pinnacles of artistic fulfilment at the hands of directors like Eisenstein who not only used editing to make montage but also gave cinema new style and language which was opposite to Andre Bazin’s emphasis on mise-en-scène.

Speaking on the way novels and films handle time and space in their respective ways, Bluestone opines that films cannot show dreams, memories and imagination as adequately as novels can. The reason, once again, is found in the nature of signs these two mediums use. Novels use verbal signs which can perform metaphoric function more easily than the cinematic signs because verbal signs communicate relying upon human fecundity of imagination; whereas cinematic signs, according to Bluestone, can cause obstacles in letting our imagination work freely as they are literal in nature.

If the film has difficulty presenting streams of consciousness, it has even more difficulty presenting states of mind which are defined precisely by the absence in them of the visible world. Conceptual
imaging, by definition, has no existence in space ... Assuming here a difference between *kinds* of images- between images of things, feelings, concepts, words- we may observe that conceptual images evoked by verbal stimuli can scarcely be distinguished in the end from those evoked by nonverbal stimuli. The stimuli, whether they be signs of language or the sense data of the physical world, lose their spatial characteristics and become components of the total ensemble which is consciousness... On the other hand, the film image, being externalised in space, cannot be similarly converted through the conceptual screen (Bluestone 47).

But the cinema itself has answered Bluestone’s objections earnestly. With the help of editing techniques such as dissolve, fade in, fade out, super-imposition, filmmakers have succeeded in taking the viewers into the minds of their characters and also moving back and forth in time. Bluestone, continuing with his prejudice against cinema in these terms says, “...but it cannot show us thought directly. It can show us character thinking, feeling and speaking, but it cannot show us their thoughts and feelings” (Bluestone 48). The answer to this objection would be- such is the nature of cinematic signs. Film is primarily a performing art. As in drama, inner thoughts and feelings of characters are not directly shown rather shown through action or speech acts. This is the way a film also communicates. What a student or a scholar should worry about is how far film has succeeded in showing inner thoughts and feelings of a character; rather than being sceptical about the nature of its signs. Novel can very easily talk in three tenses which cannot be done in a film. But what is more important is capability of films to show linear temporality and disrupted temporality. Both novels and films have succeeded in their attempt to experiment with the treatment of time. If a novel can devote more than ten pages for ten chronological minutes and, at the same time, jump through a period of ten months in just one paragraph or a sentence; film can also suspend and accelerate time by slow-motion and fast-motion or show ellipsis of more than 20 years. Moreover, with the help of editing or by simply writing text on the screen, an ellipsis of any number of years can also be suggested.
Similarly, with the help of editing, space in cinema can also be manipulated. In stead of showing a “soulless” recording of events from a fixed position and angle, by juxtaposing long shots with close-ups, the space in cinema also defamiliarizes the actual reality and presents an artistic reality. Pudovkin calls these potentialities of cinema as filmic time and filmic space; whereas Panofsky calls it Dynamization of Space and the Spatialization of Time.

The director then creates a new reality, and the most characteristics and important aspect of this process is that of space and time which are ordinarily invariable or inescapable become “tractable and obedient.” Hollywood silent comedians made use of this freedom in their own unique way. James Agee has noted how Mack Sennett...gave inanimate objects a mischievous life of their own...

No other narrative art has been able to achieve such graphic effects...

Not only is space liberated, but because it is liberated, time is, too. In thirty seconds, we shoot, stem, bud, and blossom grow gracefully one from the other, a process that takes weeks in ordinary time (Bluestone 52).

Owing to spatial mobility in cinema space, time could also become flexible. Owing to this attribute, cinema has succeeded in showing time in-flux even better than novels. Since language operates in tenses, mere the presence of present participle and of past participle breaks the in-flux experience of time. Images do not operate in tenses and hence, portray the in-flux nature of time better than verbal language.

Seymour Chatman brings our attention to another aspect of treatment of time in novels and films here. According to him, novels can afford to stop the narration at any point of time and devote considerable time to descriptive pause; film, by virtue of its very nature cannot afford to do so. He gives an example from Charles Dicken’s Great Expectations in which Pip is threatened by Magwitch and suddenly the action stops there and Dickens gives the narrative a descriptive pause to describe the appearance of the convict. In a film, narrative cannot make such descriptive pauses in the middle of an action.

But in the movie version, the sense of continuing action could not stop. Even if there were a long pause to give us a chance to take in
the fearsome details of Magwitch’s person, we would still feel that the clock of story-time was ticking away, that that pause was included in the story and not just an interval as we perused the discourse (Chatman 440).

No doubt, film narratives also use descriptive shots but the duration of such shots, generally, are too small to suspend time for a considerable period of time. Descriptive shots are tightly embedded into the narrative shots or sometimes, narrative shots also fulfil the function of descriptive shot. Second, Chatman also comments on the limitation of films to be as evocative in description, as novels can be. The reason for this, again, lies in the nature of signs these two mediums use. Picking an example from Maupassant’s story in which Mademoiselle Dufor is said to be a “pretty girl of eighteen,” Chatman says:

She was a pretty girl of about eighteen,” seems on the face of it a straightforward description; but look at it from the point of view of a filmmaker. For one thing, “pretty” is not only descriptive but evaluative: one person’s “pretty” may be another person’s “beautiful” and still a third person’s “plain.”…The interesting theoretical point to be made about evaluative description in verbal narrative is that they can invoke visual elaboration in the reader’s mind. If he or she requires one, each reader will provide just the mental image to suit his or her own notions of prettiness. But the best a film (or theatre) director can hope for is some degree of consensus with the spectator’s ideal of prettiness (442).

Chatman has hinted at a very crucial point. In a novel, the invocation of visualisation of words results into highly subjective imagination; film, on the contrary, gives its viewers a real face to look at which viewers may or may not agree with. Similarly, adjectives and adverbs used in literature also invoke subjective images in the minds of reader, which no film can succeed in complying with everybody’s imagination. Any actor, who plays a character, has a particular height, figure, features and general appearance. A film director with the help of make-up always tries to change the looks of an actor to suit the character but one cannot
change the basic appearance of an actor. Similarly, any description of the gait of a character, looks one wears during the course of the progression of narrative, emotional expressions and other contours of face and every minor detail in a film may or may not comply with the viewers’ imagination.

Editing also helps in controlling Order, Duration and Frequency of the events told in a narrative. The issue of order touches linear or non-linear editing. A story told in linear chronology in fiction can be given analepsis or prolepsis in the film. These narratological devices had been popular with filmmakers making films of a particular film genre e.g. film noirs have shown tendency to use analeptic chronology and also for retrospective off-screen narrators. Similarly, French cine-roman films have shown their propensity to employ subjective prolepses. While studying duration in adaptation, we make a comparative study of discourse time of events common in both the narratives. Sometimes, filmmakers give an event more time than given to them in the novel and sometimes, an event given more discourse time in the novel finishes quickly in the film. The technique of montage helps in compressing too much information in a few shots. In a novel, the same amount of information might have taken more than two pages, but montage may compress them in a sequence lasting for a few seconds only. The function of editing is too obvious in the case of frequency. With the help of editing, a film narrative can be made singulative, repetitive, iterative or homologous.\(^{19}\)

Besides time, narration, narrators and point of view constitute other important elements of narratology and it is interesting to observe how adaptation negotiates with these elements of narratology. Novel in its entire growth has witnessed various forms of narrators and narration such as epistolary, outside observer, reflexive narrator, third person omniscient narrator, subjective, objective, intimate and impersonal narrators. In films, narration is primarily done by camera or FCD. After the introduction of sound tracks in cinema, voice-over became another option for narration for the filmmakers. *Citizen Kane* (1941), a film which is known for its mise-en-scène, capable of narrating more than cinematographic compositions of any other film, used various character narrators for narrating various events

\(^{19}\) the terms have already been described in Chapter 1.
pertaining to Kane’s life. Film cannot use ‘I’ or ‘We’ the way novels often do. Presence of voice-over doesn’t make any film narrative a subjective one. Rather, it complicates literary narration by practising two parallel and intersecting forms of narrations: the verbal narration, whether through voice-over and/or the speech of character, and the film’s capacity to show the world and its appearance apart from voice-over and character narration. For André Gaudreault, filmic narration superimposes “monstration” (showing)- the gesture which creates the fictional world- and “narration” (telling) whereby editing and other editing cinematic procedures inscribe the activity of a filmic narrator who evaluates and comments on the fictional world (Stam 35).

The entity of narrator in films is also as abstract as it is the in novels. It has been called *le grand imagier* by Albert Laffay and as meganarrator by André Gaudreault. Cinema is quite capable of showing the relation between the events told and their temporal position, different levels of narration, different types of narrators. In the history of world cinema, we find many experiments have been done with levels of narration and types of narrators even while adapting films from novels or from other sources. MacFarlane gives two ways to portray first person narration in cinema-first, the use of subjective cinema and second, the use of voice-over. In the former technique, point-of-view shot is used in order to portray the position of the first person narrator throughout the film. The entire film is shot from the point-of-view of the narrator or character-narrator which in itself is quite difficult to maintain in the entire film. Such an experiment had been done in *Lady in the Lake* (1946) which in the history of cinema has “the status of curiosity rather than of a major contribution” (MacFarlane 16). The latter way of showing first-person narration in the cinema is to use voice-over of the narrator. Though the traditionalists had always been against the use of voice-over as they felt that this technique was un-cinematic, they believed that cinema primarily communicates through images and it should strive to communicate only through images as far as possible. But the use of voice-over has its own benefits. It is only with this technique that the past tense in films
can be suggested, otherwise, film, being a performing art, always operates in the present tense.

The omniscient narration is a narrative technique often used in the novels. In the case of adaptation of novels with omniscient narrator, narration is attributed to the camera which Jahn Manfred calls as Filmic Composition Device (FCD). David MacCabe is of the opinion that in a film, camera shows us everything which Bordwell challenges saying that films communicate not only through camera but also through lighting, costume, gesture and even sound. In this controversy, I think, the way two different theorists have used the word ‘camera’ is more important. Even if film communicates through gesture, costumes, lighting and sound; different elements of film narrative are given to the viewers through camera and projector only. A projector can project what a camera has captured. Moreover, lighting, gestures, costumes all these elements are constitutive parts of mise-en-scène. Even in that sense all these elements are made available to the viewers with the help of camera only. Indulging in the debate of capability of the camera to portray on screen the omniscient narrator, MacFarlane states:

For one thing (and a very obvious one) the camera—here used metonymically to denote its operator and whoever is telling him what to aim it at, and how—is outside the total discourse of the film, whereas the omniscient narrator is inextricably a part of the novel’s. or perhaps it is truer to say that the omniscient narration is inextricably part of the novel’s total discourse, as much so as the spoken words of the characters. By exercising control over the mise-en-scène and soundtrack or through the manipulations of editing, the filmmaker can adapt some of the functions of this narratorial prose. The latter may indicate adverbially the tone of voice in which a remark is made by a character, the camera, on the other hand, may register a similar effect through attention to the actor’s facial expression or posture (i.e. aspects of mise-en-scène), or by cutting so as to reveal a response to such a remark (i.e. through montage) which will guide the viewer’s perception to such a remark (i.e. through montage) which will guide the viewer’s perception of the remark, as
well as through the actor’s vocal inflection (i.e. sound track) (MacFarlane 18).

However, he also opines that in the matters pertaining to portrayal of description, objects, activities, there are chances that cinematic reality can even replace the reality created in the novels; but the situation in the matters of characters and their psychology is more complex as cinematic language is more suggestive than that of verbal. An omniscient narrator can very easily tell in words what a character is thinking, but in a film narrative images can only make suggestive signs which an intelligent viewer has to decipher for himself. However, according to MacFarlane, cinema is more comfortable with ‘restricted consciousness’ than with omniscient or first-person narration. Both the modes of narration—first person and omniscient imply foreknowledge of the events going to be narrated or know more than the reader and

This sense of foreknowledge is no doubt intimately connected to the characteristic past-tense rendering of the prose narrative as opposed to the perceptual immediacy of the film. The novelistic form of the restricted consciousness (as in Daisy Miller) perhaps approximates most closely to the cinematic narrative mode (MacFarlane 19).

Using restricted consciousness mode of narration implies the use of ‘central reflectors’ as called by Cohen who while describing the art of Conrad and James makes the issue of point-of-view important. Readers and viewers, generally easily identify themselves with the vantage point from which the story is narrated and at the same time, they are aware that there is more comprehensive world view than the available one. MacFarlane opines that this little more comprehensive world view is analogous to the over the shoulder point of view shot used in cinema.

Point of view is common between novel and film, but the way point of view operates in these two different arts is quite important especially while studying adaptation. But for Auteur criticism on the horizon of film theory, it would have been difficult to ascribe any point of view to a film. Films used to be the property of the studios which were taking liberties with films made by the directors to suit their business needs. Directors began to be considered as the real authors of the film only after the emergence of auteur criticism. Yet it is difficult to ascribe point of view in
a film solely to the director as camera, though only an instrument for recording, intervenes in the whole politics. In literature the term ‘point of view’ can be used literally or figuratively hinting at an abstract concept; but in films, at least at one level, it is always literal. It becomes figurative only through certain cinematic techniques. If point of view in film is ascribed to the director, it again raises various questions such as whether this shift in point of view is ideological, aesthetic or only an emotional one. If it is ascribed to camera- a soulless device meant for recording without intervening, to give objectivity to the point of view in a film, the question is if a camera can work of its own. It is always controlled by a camera man who again works according to the instructions he receives from the director. If it is the director who controls everything, what is the position of scriptwriter in this politics? Can scriptwriter’s point of view also be reflected in the film? Film being a multi-track and pan medium of art, every single shot with a particular camera angle, type of shot used can give a different point of view. Moreover, besides camera other elements of cinematography, mise-en-scéne, even music can help in constructing the point of view. Robert Stam gives an interesting example how cinematic point of view is a result of all the elements put together and also comments on different nature of point of view in two different mediums-

If a romantic kiss is accompanied by saccharine music, haloed backlighting, and misty-eyed performance, we can assume that the narrational point of view is unified and redundant. If the same scene is accompanied by circus music and garish color, we suspect that the director is distancing us from the romantic sentiment of the scene. Unlike literary point of view, filmic point of view is usually quite precise and literal. We can look “with” a character, for example, or the director or actor can look directly at us, in a way unavailable to the literary author or character (Stam 39).

That is why the term point of view in relation to films in general and adaptation in particular is supposed to be “problematic because it gestures in so many directions at once” (Stam 38). The implications of point of view in adaptation are far reaching. For example, it is easier in a novel to have first-person point of view as the use of pronoun ‘I’ would suggest it. But in films, camera should stand
for ‘I’ and “to present any action strictly and rigorously from the eyes of a first-person observer means excluding that observer from the scene” (Boyum 88). It is a matter of commonsense that if there is a first person point of view in a film, the viewing person cannot be shown by the camera. If he also happens to be a participant in the narrative, the character/actor will always remain absent from the scene he is observing unless he appears in a mirror. The classic example of the first person point of view in cinema is Montgomery’s *Lady In The Lake* (1946) an adaptation of Raymond Chandler’s story in which the director has tried to maintain first person point of view in the entire film. The character-narrator-focalizer remained absent from the film and camera is always given his position. This resulted into sometimes awkward and difficult situations such as:

In conversation with him, then, the other characters found themselves addressing the camera directly—which in itself wasn’t all that awkward. But when at one point the heroine (played by Audrey Totter) started moving toward the camera, beginning to embrace and kiss it, and when, in a fight scene, the attackers found themselves punching straight out at us, the results were ludicrous (Boyum 88).

Similarly, in case of subjective or character focalization or point of view, point of view shot can be used to hint character’s position whose point of view is there either in the scene or in the entire narrative. There are different ways to make point of view shot. One of the most popular techniques used in Hollywood films is to use over the shoulder point of view shot in which camera is placed over the shoulder of the person whose point of view is to be shown. We only see back of his head and shoulder and the front of the person, he/she is talking to. Similarly, with the help of editing also point of view shot is created. In this technique, generally, first the object seen is shown which is followed by the next shot showing the onlooker.

As compared to the first person point of view, it is easier in films to have third person point of view- a position in which camera acts for the third person point of view. As it is generally found in fiction that third person point of view is, most of the times, also omniscient. By virtue of which, reader are made acquainted with characters inner thoughts and feelings; and the narrator knows what happened even
before the beginning of the story. In films, camera with the help of certain cinematic
deVICES can perform the function more easily than it performs the function of first
person or subjective point of view. With the help of voice-over narration, camera
can give us any prior information required to understand the relation between what
is shown in the narrative and the events happened prior to the beginning of the

Novel as an art form witnessed a major development in its form and
subject matter in the twentieth century. Owing to Bergson, a French philosopher,
who gave the idea of ‘continuous flow’ in experience, and time as a bottom less,
bankless river that is always in flux and William James’ similar ideas about time; the
focus of fiction in the twentieth century shifted from ‘without’ to ‘within.’
Characters and plot became rather fragmented and discontinuous entities; linear
chronology was disrupted. Fiction, instead of portraying realism of outside world
started portraying subtle and complex realities of mind. This gave the world
psychological fiction and stream of consciousness narratives. James Joyce and
Virginia Woolf were two great masters of this new art form. Virginia Woolf’s
prejudice against films and adaptation has already been discussed, but Joyce, on the
contrary, liked films and was also not against the idea of adapting his 
Ulysses into a

It received mixed response from critics and filmmakers. Critics have
wondered how cinema would negotiate to adapt a stream of consciousness novel
with “rambling sentences, intricate and extensive patterns of verbal imagery”
(Boyum 190) and how it would show and tell inner thoughts, so easily written down
in verbal language in psychological novels. They found Virginia Woolf’s technique
of moving from point to point in time and moving from one consciousness to
another in a single moment difficult to translate into the medium of cinema.
However, non-linear chronology of time, fluid movement of the narrative and
emphasis on the world of consciousness, narratives operating in the domain of time
and not space gave filmmakers new challenges to portray new versions of reality.
The stream of consciousness novels were found to be “filmic” by certain

Sergei Eisenstein found mosaic structure in Joyce’s novels analogous to
his technique of montage. He thought this could be achieved in cinema with the help of his “dynamic editing,” but he could not make the film. Later Stuar Gilbert, Louis Zukovasky tried to write screenplays of Joyce’s novel which Joyce also encouraged. Even Warner Brothers’ also made efforts to secure rights for these screenplays. A production company like Warner Brothers’ toiling to get the rights itself signifies the idea of making films of stream of consciousness was even commercially viable. So far as the sentiment that Virginia Woolf’s technique of shifting from one consciousness to another in a single moment of time is concerned, it can be easily achieved with the help of parallel editing. Consequently, three films based on Joyce’s works have been made. Joseph Strick made *Ulysses* (1967) and *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1979) and Marry Ellen Bute directed *Passages from Finnegan’s Wake* (1965) Besides, Virginia Woolf’s *Mrs. Dalloway* (1997) has also been done into a film by Marleen Gorris and *Orlando* has been adapted into a film by Sally Porter in 1992. All of the above mentioned adaptations have won acclaim, though some critics feel that filmmakers couldn’t do little justice to Joyce’s works as films suffer from “slimness of what is sometimes called their ‘production value’” (Boyum 194). If novelists like Woolf and Joyce have succeeded in expressing the river like human consciousness successfully, filmmaker like Fellini in *8½* (1963) and Resnais in *Providence* (1976) have succeeded in showing in cinema the minds of the filmmaker and dying writer respectively. As there are not many writers of stream of consciousness technique, there aren’t many filmmakers who have dared make films on this technique. The makers of *The Blood of the Poet* (1930), *Cries and Whispers* (1972), *Belle de Jour* (1967), *Two or Three Things I Know About Her* (1966), *Every Body Says I am Fine* (2001), *Slaughterhouse-Five* (1972), *Swann in Love* (1984), *Images* (1972) are also creations of the few.

Another aspect of fiction which seems to be difficult to define and translate into films is style. Writers in different periods of time have been using the same language in different styles. Diction of the writers of Eighteenth century writers is much different from the Romantics, and equally different are their subjects. Even within the Romantics, the diction of first two Romantic poets i.e. Wordsworth and Coleridge is quite different. Among the novelists, Dickens is different from Thackeray; Thomas Hardy is different from George Eliot; James Joyce is different
from Virginia Woolf in style. The concept of style is not limited to the choice of vocabulary or syntax of a particular writer, it is “one way of speaking about the totality of art.” In totality of art comes both matter and manner. When a writer makes “inevitable distinction between matter and manner,” Susan Sontag calls it “stylization” (Sontag as quoted by Boyum 118).

Style in relation to films became important with the emergence of the idea of auteur theory. It is since then that every director has tried to develop his own ‘style’ of film-making. Each director is recognised for his idiosyncratic use of camera angle, shots, editing, lighting and other cinematic devices. Though this debate was revived in Francois Truffaut’s 1954 essay ‘Une certaine tendance du cinéma’ published in Cahier du cinema which became a manifesto for French New Wave; but “auteur is a term that dates back to the 1920s in the theoretical writings of French film critics and directors of silent era” (Hayward 20). Triggered off by Cahier, the group associated auteur with mise-en-scène. Thus, every filmmaker was using mise-en-scène to express his vision, imagination and style. In cinema of other countries as well we find such filmmakers who are still remembered for their style of cinematography. Orson Wells is respected for his use of mise-en-scène in much acclaimed film Citizen Kane (1941). Sergei Eisenstein, a Russian filmmaker is remembered for his use of montage, though a different technique from mise-en-scène, but he succeeded in developing his own style of cinematography. His technique of “dynamic editing” made matter and manner of his films two different entities. Godard, Fellini, Griffith are to name a few who are known for their unique style in film-making.

But when we study style in adaptation, it becomes more problematic as the sign system of two mediums is entirely different. It is extremely difficult to maintain the style of one writer even while translating a writer’s work from one verbal language into another; and in case of shift from verbal signs to interplay of image, sound and verbal signs, it seems almost impossible to translate the style of the novelist in the film as film is likely to have its own style. Boyum looks at the other aspect of the debate in her book Double Exposure. She says:

But if the specific techniques by which one mounts style in film differ from those by which one creates style in fiction, this still
doesn’t quite explain just why translation should be considered so difficult. To begin with, since the same varying definitions apply, style can be seen not simply as a function of the specific properties of the medium—of its distinctive language and techniques; it can also be seen as a function of other elements besides structure, modes of characterization, content itself, all of which are much more easily transferable from one medium to another medium than are qualities of language. Additionally, if style is, as some would claim, the expression of an artist’s individuality (and thus resistant to adaptation, where another artist’s individuality intercedes); style is also often the expression of quite the opposite: of one artist’s tie with other artist… (122).

Boyum doesn’t see adaptation as interference of one artist’s style with another artist’s; rather she perceives adaptation as an interaction, a dialogue between two artists and their creativity which in itself is an enriching activity. Her understanding of style is not limited to the use of words only in which a critic is tempted to look at how far the filmmaker has succeeded in translating certain phrases, adverbs and adjectives into cinematic language. Her understanding, rather, includes elements like characterization, narrative structure also. Another problem that is associated with style is of time period. If a filmmaker is adapting a work written in the Eighteenth century or the Nineteenth century, it would certainly become difficult to translate the ‘style’ of period novels in the twenty-first century. It would be a great challenge to translate into cinema, as called by Susan Sontag, the “historical consciousness” of the novels. It has been seen that sometimes basic changes are brought in the narrative when a filmmaker is adapting a work that belongs to a period. For example, in James Whale’s *Frankenstein* (1931) much space has been given to the creation of monster than given in the novel and in Wolfgang Petersen’s *Troy* (2004) Gods are not participating in the war of Troy. The reason for the former is that when the film was made the science had developed more than when the novel was written. It was easier for the filmmaker to imagine the entire process of ‘creation’ of the monster in a laboratory than it was possible in 1818 when the novel was published; and for the latter, in the 21st century world view
of man “God is dead” and hence, they are shown as ineffective and non-participatory in the affairs of men.

Within adaptation the source book or story can be from literary or sub-literary group. For example, Hitchcock’s *The Wrong Man* (1957) is based on a newspaper story and *Spiderman* (2002) is based on a comic strip which had previously been adapted for TV in animation for as well. At the same time, films like *Wittgenstein* (1993) and *Iris* (2001) explore the lives of a philosopher and a novelist respectively. But Robert Stam goes a step further and looks at every film as an adaptation as every film is adapted from a script. Robert Stam, here, is thinking like Bluestone who also looked at the relation between novel and the script at a point of intersection where “book and shooting-script are almost indistinguishable” (Bluestone 63). If adaptation is all about shift from words to images, this shift is there in every film. Since every film negotiates the shift from verbal signs to cinematic signs, Robert Stam is against the use of the term ‘fidelity,’ as every film is based on written words. It is because of the difference in the basic nature of the signs of the respective mediums that changes are inevitable. In the process of adaptation, he says,

source-novel hypotexts are transformed by a complex series of operations: selection, amplification, concretization, actualization, critique, popularization, reaccentuation, transculturalization. The source novel, in this sense, can be seen as a situated utterance, produced in one medium and in one historical and social context, and later transformed into another, equally situated utterance, produced in a different context and relayed through a different medium (Stam 46).

His appeal is not to concentrate on the issue of fidelity but on employment of creative energy used in the process of adaptation and to look at film and novel as two independent texts. If they are two different and independent texts, according to him, the relation between film and source novel can be seen in terms of intertextuality. George Bluestone, however, remains critical of adaptation and calls it “a kind of paraphrase” (Bluestone 62) in which novel is seen as a raw material to be consumed and used in the process of adaptation. Bluestone’s prejudice is premised upon the notion of considering literature superior to films. According to
Deborah Cartmell, we don’t study adaptations to discover whether the film is faithful to the novel or not, we should study films as an independent form of art and should study adaptations “for their generation of a plurality of meanings” (Cartmell as quoted by Stam 28).

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