



## RESEARCH ARTICLE

### THE NATURE OF CINEMATIC LANGUAGE AND ITS DIFFERENCE WITH THAT OF LITERATURE

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#### ABSTRACT

The cinematographic adaptation of literary texts is often considered from a defensive or protectionist perspective in a culture where literature has long exercised its hegemony: transposition or adaptation in costume, the spectator is happy to declare respect for the original text, and on the conformity of the filmmaker's vision with his own vision. We would like to propose here a new approach to cinematographic adaptation: whereas cinema is an art distinct from literature, we will start from the hypothesis that text and film, even if they bear the same name, do not belong not the same species, and therefore cannot be the subject of a simple comparison. After examining the traditional evaluation criteria of adaptation (fidelity, spirit and letter, narrative construction, dialogue processing, voiceover, etc.), we will try to move the lines of confrontation to show how cinema, instead of simply illustrating literary texts, by the very fact that it is a means of autonomous expression, necessarily proposes a thought of literature.

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## INTRODUCTION

Cinema, as well as literature, has its own means, which they do not share willingly. The adaptation of a novel to make a film necessarily requires to use the same material, the same "story", but, it is above all to forget the book, in other words to make a film (Cl Carrière, 1993). What matters is the narrative mode used by the novel or film from the same story. This explains the nature of cinematographic language and its difference with that of literature. Cinema has always drawn heavily on literary material. Some detractors of the new art accused the cinema of being only a machine to print the theater, to visualize the music, and to illustrate the literature, whereas the unconditional ones of the 7th art maintained that the cinema brought the final synthesis of the various forms of expression of man and, of course, rendered these other means imperfect or obsolete, and would replace them all. This extremist, exaggerated attitude approached the truth, since it revealed (Barthelemy, 1971) that all the arts respond to the same human vocation and satisfy similar requirements. But each uses its own laws and styles because techniques and means specify as well as shapes. The cinematographic adaptation covers, in the broad sense, various practices, ranging from cinéroman to the novelisation. In its most usual sense, a literary work is used to transpose it to the cinema. This was the case, from the beginning of the twentieth century, of a very large number of films adapting plays, novels and short stories.

In the 1920s, some avant-gardes believe that cinema must be a new plastic expression, an autonomous art. Delluc and Epstein who feel the need for a narrative frame do not find any difference between original or adapted scenario, but criticize the "filmed theater" (théâtre filmé) formula that Marcel Pagnol will provoke at the beginning of the speaking, arguing that the real author of the film adapted is always the writer (Journot, 2008). Often, this hypothesis is not true, especially when the act of adaptation becomes a pure creation and the adapter reappropriates the original work, giving it a new reading thanks to the medium that is the camera. According to Jean Claude Carrière, no form of art can translate exactly another. No literary essay can account for a film, and vice versa (Cl. Carrière, 1993). If the cinema borrowed from the other forms of art elements that allowed it to enrich its own language, nevertheless it remains dependent on these elements. Throughout the thirties, the technical evolution of the elements of the film completely disinterested the audience of the content of the cinematographic work to the detriment of what can be called literature. The cinematographic bet is purely spectacular, leaving no room for literary interpretation of the film's content. We note that from 1945, the stagnation of technical progress significantly affects the filmic elements which will lead the viewer to be more interested in the content of the film. This duality between the technical aspect of cinema and its interest in literature will appear at different times in its evolution, with reversals of situations. Throughout its evolution, the cinema has maintained complex relations with literature, deviating from time to time its narrative model, without the relationship between these two modes of narration

is never broken. From now on, this relationship of narrative affinity with the novel imposes the comparison of two types of narrative. The camera has become the equal of the pen. Can we say that cinema has entered the age of the screenplay? Another form of writing appears. As per Alexandre Astruc the act of the adapter is an act of creation when it results from the rewriting of a literary text with tools specific to the cinema. In this regard, he said, the "camera is a pen" (« caméra est un « stylo » ») (J.-M. Clerc, M. Carcaud-Marcaire, 2004: 28) thanks to which the filmmaker, with respect to the novelist, could express his thought, also abstract be it (Henri Agel, 1966). For him, the formula, camera pen is an image that has a very precise meaning; it means that the film is gradually tearing itself away from the tyranny of the visual, from the image to the image, to become a means of writing as flexible and subtle as that of written language. It leads to a famous conclusion: The staging is no longer a means to illustrate or present a scene, but a true writing: the author writes with the camera as a writer written with his pen. In "The birth of a new avant-garde: the pen camera" (« Naissance d'une nouvelle avant-garde : la caméra stylo »), which the critic and director has shifted from the possibilities of cinema to those of language, leads us to notice that, in certain films, "cinematographic language gives an equivalent literary language" (« le langage cinématographique donne un équivalent exact du langage littéraire ») (Jean Cleder, 2006). As such, it makes the filmmaker a creator in the same way as the writer when he moves the act of writing the script towards the realization itself (Astruc, 2016). As a result, the problem of adaptation takes on another resonance. It is no longer a question of giving a view of literary reality, but of giving the voice of an author to be heard, of making the viewer take the same distance from the real as the fictional work, built on the refraction of this reality that is the sensitivity of the narrator. Thus, the scriptwriter in his act of rewriting takes note of the transposition of reality from an emotional point of view.

François Truffaut theorist and French filmmaker of the new wave is of another opinion when he violently condemns the method of screenwriters-adapters, François Truffaut does not dissociate the act of writing from that of the realization, and conceives the act adaptation and implementation as a single operation conducted by one person. From there, he sets up the concept of "author", and attacks adapters that proceed by "equivalence", inventing scenes when those that are written become impossible to turn. It seems important to us to define the word adaptation in order to distinguish the different possibilities of its use and the meaning that we can give it from a literary work. It is first of all an attempt at cinematographic transposition of a literary text, or a literary transposition of a cinematographic text, and that supposes a deferred restitution and a different partner (Clerc and Carcaud-Marcaire, 2004). The original text is read through a rewriting that presupposes a reading in which fits the mode of specific appropriation belonging to an individual, fits into another time and another space. According to some theorists, the meaning of the word adapt is to transform. The cinematographic adaptation of a literary text poses ambiguous problems. Each text, literary or cinematographic original or adapted, constitutes in itself a specific system or only certain elements of the original texts are able to undergo transpositions. The latter necessarily imply complex interactions with the new iconic medium, but also with the cultural and social environment in which the system of industrial diffusion of the image will project them. These transpositions most often lead to internal modifications

affecting the relations of the original elements to each other. There is in the word adapt, the idea of conforming, of agreeing a mode of (literary) expression and another one, that of cinema. It is also a question of linking two textual and contextual sets, transposition into another mode of expression. This therefore characterizes a certain relationship of obligation that may not be conceivable between literature and cinema: there is no contract. The vocation of the cinema is not to compete with the literature on its field, that of the narration, but to invent plastic forms. These offer a new relevance to the literary text without necessarily moving away from it.

In the term "transform" then "transformation" appears an idea of change or even metamorphosis from one passage to another, directly involving the transfiguration. It is a question of changing the aspect and the nature of the literary work to give a plastic character to the film, at least as an autonomous unit. Indeed, there are intertextual and contextual constraints that make the novel and the film a risky and yet essential rapprochement. If we take again the term "adaptation", this one corresponds to a transformation, a surpassing of the work, can be not a transfiguration but rather a resurrection of the literary work. Adaptation is also the transposition of one mode of expression to another, using appropriate tools. There is also talk of translation, as if literature needed cinema to be understood. So the term "adaptation" is defined differently, but undoubtedly represents the action of moving from a language that has its own laws to another. If literature is expressed by words, cinema uses image. In both cases, it is the passage from one language to another, from one mode of expression to another, where each retains most of its mode of expression. The literary narrative is articulated on a mode of narration which is peculiar to it, different from that borrowed from the cinematographic narrative. In this way of telling stories through words, the cinema opposes its own narrative form based on a language that finds its strength in the movements of the camera, the framing, the angles of shooting, the direction of the actors and the editing, considered an essential tool for cinematic storytelling. Adaptation bet on difference. Unable to translate word-by-word the original text, the filmmaker was free to seek equivalences to the general meaning of the literary work, at the expense of any concern for literary fidelity. So, it was necessary to "rethink the work on a different plane" (« repenser l'œuvre sur un plan différent »). On the plane of light and silence, in terms of symbols. Indeed, it was necessary to forget the peculiarities of the novel which had served as point of departure (Clerc, M. Carcaud-Marcaire, 2004). This is the lesson of Jean Epstein, who confessed then not to see any difference between "Original scenario and scenario-adaptation" (« scénario original et scénario-adaptation »). He said about it:

"I treat every script as original as belonging to me from the first moment of realization to the last. I had read Mauprat, fifteen years ago, I only read it to correct my titles, after the completion of the film; the subject of the film Mauprat is the memory of my first enthusiastic and superficial understanding of romanticism. The Fall of Usher House is my general impression on Poe. (Lepron, 1929, in Clerc, M. Carcaud-Marcaire, 2004)

(« Je traite tout scénario comme original comme m'appartenant depuis le premier moment de la réalisation jusqu'au dernier. J'avait lu Mauprat, il y a quinze ans, je ne l'ai relu que pour corriger mes titres, après l'achèvement du film ; le sujet du film

*Mauprat est le souvenir de ma première compréhension enthousiaste et très superficielle du romantisme. La Chute de la Maison Usher est mon impression en général sur Poe. »* (Leprobon, 1929; Clerc, M. Carcaud-Marcaire, 2004)

Cinema cannot replace literature as a mode of expression with its own language. The concept of fidelity to the work often paradoxically passes through an apparent infidelity. This explains why the concept of fidelity lies in the deep meaning of the work, far from its appearance. The best adaptations remain mostly recreates, those which undergo transformations to the original novel work. The notion of fidelity sometimes remains necessary but it is neither systematic nor obligatory. It becomes constrained in the case where it delimits the cinematographic work in relation to the literary work and deprives it of any creative contribution. The director merely illustrated the text, remaining locked in the concept of fidelity of the film in relation to the literary work. This form of adaptation is part of the so-called faithful and unfaithful form in relation to the content of the work: a social, cultural and political content. The concept of fidelity is not measured by a literal translation in the description of the novelistic events as is the case of our study but by a rewriting of story with visual means to give the literary work another life. With this approach the filmmaker privileged the illustrative approach of the literary text at the risk of remaining on the surface of what the work can give to the film.

### Conclusion

In conclusion we can say to adapt we must rewrite the work where the concern for the act of adaptation does not lie in the search for the equivalent of the word by the image, but in the exploitation of some dormant potentialities in the original text by a redistribution of meanings that can be made from text to film. There is no more superiority of the literary text on the film, but a will to make disappear the writing in favor of the visual. In a way that may be simplistic, these analyzes, in the name of the novelty of the material, gave the director complete freedom with regard to the literary text. "Do we understand the importance of this word: visual? It is in him that all the art of the cinematographic transposition resides " (*«Comprend-on l'importance de ce mot : faire visuel. C'est en lui que réside tout l'art de la transposition cinématographique»*) said Jaques Feyder to sum up the essential of the argument held by the mute enthusiasts who underlined the enormous advantage offered by the " universality "of the picture (Carcaud-Marcaire and Clerc, 1995).

Faced with the inability to translate the word-by-word, the director was free to seek equivalences to the general meaning of the book, at the expense of any concern for fidelity. It was necessary to "rethink the work on a different plane" (*«repenser l'œuvre sur un plan différent»*) as Jacques Feyder put it (Carcaud-Marcaire and Clerc, 1995). This finding finds its explanation in the specific nature of literary works, by their themes, even the style of writing that did not answer or offer the cinema the possibility of bringing them to the screen. The naturalistic writing is privileged by the adaptive aim because it is already perceived in some way as cinematographic. The naturalistic novel lent itself to adaptation. The debates aroused around the film adaptation the lack of interest for the literature. Due to a crucial lack of professional screenwriters, able to take charge of film writing, literature is called upon to solve the problem of the scarcity of good stories to make good filmic films by adaptation. Today many writers are asked to write stories in order to be adapted to the cinema. It is time for filmmakers and novelists to work together with the same interest that of telling great stories each with the means imposed by its mode of expression.

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