

The Multiple Directorial Visions of the Theatrical Text of Arthur Miller's Play Death of a Salesman

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Abstract: *The director relies on a pre - prepared text in the completion of the artwork, and the theatrical text is one of the rich sources from which the director borrows an idea then he reformulate it creatively in a way that suits the visual medium according to a conscious and aware vision by employing the cinematic discourse tools from the elements of the cinematic language which visions and points of view differ from one director to another according to his/her cultural and intellectual perspectives in their handling of the same text. The researcher divided the study on this topic into two parts the methodological and the theoretical structure. The methodological frame included the research problem that is determined by the following question: What are the multiple directorial visions of the theatrical text on the selected adaptation films? Moreover, the importance of the research and its objectives represented in recognizing the different visions of the cinematic direction of the theatrical text. As for the theoretical framework, it was divided into two sections: the first: the directorial vision of the quoted text, and the second: the operation of the elements of the cinematic language on the theatrical script. Then the researcher came out with a set of indicators that he used as a tool and standard in analyzing the selected samples, which is the film: Volker Schlöndorff's Death of a Salesman 1985 and Asghar Farhadi's The Salesman 2016. In order to grasp the research objective and to draw result extraction from the analysis of samples, as the most prominent of them was a new reading of the borrowed text is generated based on the multiplicity of directorial visions and the succession of times periods for the director surrounding environment. All of this had a great role in crystallizing directorial visions through being affected by society, customs and traditions, and the culture and thought it possesses. The researcher came out with the conclusions drawn from the results of the analysis and concluded the research with a list of sources and references.*

Keywords: Directors, narrative movie, film theater

1. Introduction

Since the beginning of cinema in the first decade of the 20th century, there has been a rapid association between literature and cinema. The fusion of these two mediums took place in a serious and significant way in the 1930s, which is more commonly referred to as the age of classic cinema. Adaptation is a concept that seeks to explore the similarities between cinema and literature. In general, cinema and literature are two forms of representation of reality, where the truth can be embodied. Film and novel are two similar forms of art, this does not mean that there is an absolute similarity between them, just as there are differences between them that arise from the type of mediation in conveying the message and the means of expressing the two means. Thus, the mediator in the novel is the word and the grammatical structure, and in the film is the movement and the image. The novel seeks mental imagery, and the film seeks cinematic images. With these interpretations, the differences between the films of the novel cannot be so complete that the similarities are ignored. Perhaps the most important reason why cinema sought to cooperate with literature was that those involved in cinema at that time probably thought that this modern art would not be able to make a quantum leap at that time without relying on ancient and deep - rooted art such as literature. Literary steps can provide strong support for the art of cinema, but they cannot always preserve it, and relying on a literary work, despite its popularity and approval, is not enough to be successfully repeated. Success in the field of literature has fundamental differences with the type of success in the world of cinema. When it comes to the analogy, or more accurately, the confrontation between two art forms, the first discussion that arises is a dialogue about the difference between the two

arts' language in expressing concepts. There is something that starts from this point of view, which is that the means of expression in literature are words and in cinema is images, and the point of difference between these two methods of expression begins here. But given all these issues, cinema in the end needs words in the form of dialogue and discourse, not to mention abstract and forgotten experiences such as purely silent cinema based only on images, and literature in its new forms, such as the new story, try to approach cinema; The changes affected by the language of cinema are very basic and can be emphasized by the method of literary narration. Therefore, adaptations work best when the director and writer share a historical framework of meaning, or both are familiar with the same culture so they can shape the adaptation well. In fact, there is no requirement to turn a literary text line by line into a film. Sometimes, one can simply take a general theme and mood from a literary work and develop it at the heart of a cinematic narrative. It is a fact that, the links between literature and cinema can always be considered to be very deep and effective, especially since the presence of commonalities in areas such as storytelling, characterization, and modes of propulsion for heroes and anti - heroes. Hence, the positive link and beneficial interaction between literature and cinema is undeniable.

2. Literature Review

A considerable amount of literature has been published on various directorial visions of the theatrical text Death of a Salesman by Arthur Miller in the feature on the selected adaptation films: Volker Schlöndorff's Death of a Salesman 1985 and Asghar Farhadi's The Salesman 2016, as how Ahmadgoli and Yazdanjoo (2020) observe the adaptive and appropriate traits in Asghar Farhadi's The Salesman (2016),

as a cinematic discourse, it extends and localizes the salesman in contemporary Iran, it explores the adaptability of the salesman concept, which reproduces itself in various incarnations, in Iran in the early 2000s, with a particular focus on the politics of gender and fractured interpersonal relationships (pp.372 - 384). Consequently, in Harold Bloom's critical essay, he analyzes the theme, style, and desires of Miller's plays, he evaluates his place in American drama and accompanied by a brief chronology of his life. Moreover, Bloom examines the director of the original script of the play Volker Schlöndorff as it embodied flashbacks through the elements of the cinematic language and repeated the case of recall from the flashback memory of the character Willy Loman (p.169). Accordingly, Helmetag (1995) remarks that the director Volker Schlöndorff in the adapted film *Death of a Salesman* 1985 His Death of a Salesman bares the imperfections of capitalism and the American dream just as the play highlights that the conventional American traveling salesman Willy Loman has spent his whole life chasing the wrong dream (p.453). Moreover, Vahid Vahdat (2021) notes in the opening scene of the film *The Salesman* 2016 by Asghar Farhadi when people are shouting to get out of the building because it will collapse that architecture aids in three interrelated capacities: as a mediator of complications which Farhadi captures, as a medium upon which another layer of realism is based conceivably, and as a representation of Farhadi's pathology anxious Iranian masculinity (p.64). Additionally, Rapold Rapold et al. (2017) examine how the director Asghar Farhadi uses camera zooms to focus on the issue of revenge as well as tolerance that address the human being not to rush to make decisions against others (p.83). Therefore, following what many have asserted most of the cinematic works are based on adapting their texts from narratives or plays which are the closest arts to the cinema. By the time, cinema imposed itself as an independent medium, as Hutcheon said, "An adaptation is a derivation that is not derivative, — a work that is second without being secondary. It is its own palimpsestic thing." (2013, p.36). In terms of working elements on an audio - visual medium, those literary texts pass on directing treatment according to the cinematic vision of the director, as the vision differs from one director to another in each text that has been processed into multiple films, as in the straight adaptation, the directors adapting the text without adding or changing it, or they will use the interpretive adaptation to adapt the theatrical text to its style or they will use the text for the customs, traditions, and beliefs of their environment that has a direct impact on the psychology of the director in his interpretation of the text. Thus, through the previous discussion, we can frame the following question: What are the multiple directorial visions of the theatrical text *Death of a Salesman* by Arthur Miller in the feature on the selected adaptation films: Volker Schlöndorff's *Death of a Salesman* 1985 and Asghar Farhadi's *The Salesman* 2016.

3. Methodology

Adaptation theory is a diverging from a written text to a visual medium; such as transforming a play into a film. By time, cinema imposed itself as an independent medium, witnessing developments from the entry of sound to produce a presentation based on audio - visual media and prestigious

artistic experiences by quoting from literary and theatrical texts, with the scope of films, a new stage has begun in the relationship between the theatrical and cinematic texts. There are two types of adaptation: the first one is the literal adaptation the director transmits the play in all its details, including events, dialogues, characters, as well as all the scenography elements of the play, such as clothes and decoration, and many of these films have been completed, which are closer to the theater, where the events of the film take place in one place, and the performance and dialogue of the actor, as well as who is on the stage. Secondly, free adaptation when addressing this type, it comes to mind that it is infidelity against the original text, but the concepts of fidelity are not related to this type, but rather imposed by the mismatched expression between the two mediators. To adapt, means to convert from one medium to another medium. This adaptation requires a high creative vision on the part of the director and a great knowledge of a language, as well as the availability of a cultural and intellectual background for the director, enabling his tools, as well as sufficient knowledge on the original work so that the director can complete an integrated artwork. The concept of directorial vision is related to the director's intellectual abilities, his personality, and his own way of seeing life, and his ideological or cultural references, all of these constitute the basic building block of his vision, and that the dominant directorial vision depends on the domination of one of the linguistic elements, as the medium as the best way to express this dominant idea. This type of adaptation it always connected and determined by a certain condition, which is a new view or vision that can be added as a justification for a new achievement.

4. Discussion

The literal adaptation film of Arthur Miller's play *Death of a Salesman* which is directed by Volker Schlöndorff in 1985 in America. Starring are Dustin Hoffman as Willy Loman and Kate Reid as Linda Loman, the running time 136 minutes. The film deals with the issue of conflict within Willy's family, the young generation's lack of appreciation for the challenges of the previous generation, and the film criticizes the American Dream from two dimensions, firstly, is the single - family and what results from the disintegration and contradictions in the American society by raising the issue of poverty and ambition. Secondly, in exploitation, greed, and the resulting social crises at the end of the movie, Willy commits suicide so that his family can benefit from insurance money and get rid of debts. Schlöndorff uses straight adaptation to employ the elements of the cinematic language in embodying the contents of the visual discourse. The first element is narration, for example, at the beginning of the film Willy shows driving a car in the dark, and if the car brakes sound indicating an accident, the shot is stopped (stop cadre) (Schlöndorff, 1985, 00: 01: 25). Willy as he drives the car starts playing the flute, followed by scenes of Willy opening his door and entering the house (Schlöndorff, 1985, 00: 01: 38), the writer of the original script employed one of the flashback techniques in the narrator that became a working pillar. The director embodied flashbacks through the elements of the cinematic language and repeated the case of recall from the flashback memory of the character Willy (Bloom, 2007). The second element is the character that is

created according to its dimensions and connotations in the original text. For instance, Willy's name in English means short. For this reason, he was chosen as a short actor, suggesting he is in his sixties. Moreover, color and lighting elements, the director employed the lighting directed towards the face of the deceased character Ben to express purity and made him an angel as he plays the role of the human conscience as well as the white color of the uniform that Ben wears and the lighting managed to create the light of the day and the darkness of the night. Other parts are camera movements, angles, and shot sizes, For example, the movement of the camera Crane and jib revealed the location of the events, specifically Willy's house, which is in the middle of the higher buildings, it showed the robbery of these buildings and avoiding them, which caused the collapse of the middle class in society and what throws at Willy of class distinction (European Graduate School Video Lectures, 2011, 00: 25: 44), indifference and governmental planning absence for the country's population explosion (Schlondorff, 1985, 00: 10: 41), the symbol was used in one of the shots from the scenes before Willy left the house to commit a suicide which embodied the direction towards achieving the false American Dream and symbolizes the director's vision through a painting located behind Willie containing the American flag (Helmetag, 1995) and direct to Willy's sight towards his brother Ben who imagined his existence (Schlondorff, 1985, 02: 02: 20). Using decoration and accessories, the simple decor was used as an indication of the economic condition of Willy's family. Furthermore, he used the accessories such as Willy's glasses in scenes; he cleans his glasses with a tissue, looks at the woman, and hears voices calling him to move to another scene in the hotel, so that the glasses become the passage loop (Schlondorff, 1985, 01: 38: 38). Equally, the costumes revealed the dimensions of each character, the rich man Ben, in his luxurious white dress, which indicated a soul from another world and the living conscience of Willy. Another essential part is the audio element, sound effects at the beginning of the film, which is the sound of the brakes of the returning car and hitting something that enables the director to use this sound as an anticipation of an important event, as the death of Willy through a car accident at the end of the film (Schlondorff, 1985, 02: 03: 49). Besides, the music has a big role in expressing feelings and emotions, as the use of the flute begins in the first scene with Willy. The last part is montage is a process that also showed us through the sequence of shots and the movement of the angle down camera, as to how Willy committed suicide by dismantling part of his car. His wife Linda is keen to return him to his place every day without the knowledge of her husband; by this technique, the director focused the attention of the recipient towards this important part.

On the other hand, in the second film *The Salesman* by Asghar Farhadi 2016 in Iran, the starring is Taraneh Alidoosti as Rana Etesami and Shahab Hosseini as Emad Etesami, the running time 159 minutes. The events of the movie revolve around a married couple Emad and Rana from the educated middle class living in the capital, Tehran. They take part in the production of the play *The Death of a Salesman*. They move to live in a new apartment, unaware that her previous tenant is a prostitute. After a few days, Rana is exposed to an attempted sexual assault by one of the

old clients of the prostitute, this psychologically destroying her, and completely losing her safety feeling which prompts her husband Emad to try to find out the criminal, and takes revenge on him. Farhadi provides the elements of the cinematic language by using the interpretive adaptation to reflect his vision as Hutcheon stated, "Adaptations as repetitions without replication." (2013, p.34) in representing the contents of the visual discourse as narration, Farhadi relied on the format of the film's narration process from the first scene, with the collapse of the apartment building to move towards successive events according to their temporal and spatial sequence (Farhadi, 2016, 00: 02: 58) then focus on telling events through the expressive medium via pictures with the development of events and the detection of characters in a quiet style through the personality of Emad and Rana, despite the different beginning of the play's text and the characters are parallel and smooth, the events take place on the stage and between the scenes, as a training for theatrical performance, the occurrence of altercations and incidents within the context of the film reflected on the play presented to the audience and during the characters' performance of their roles on stage and the director left the ending open to generate multiple interpretations on the film script. With characters part, are transferring some of the dimensions, characteristics, and qualities of the protagonist's character in the theatrical text as Willy in the character of Emad, who is also represented in the same play, Emad played the role of Willy's son Biff Loman, when the attacker who works as a salesman is held accountable, in the original text the son and the father are held accountable and they quarrel. By means of color and lighting, the original text was subject to the customs, traditions, and religious teachings of the country. In the character of the prostitute, the director exceeded the intimacy between her and Willy or Emad, but the director was able through the use of the color element to highlight the character of the prostitute and its uniqueness in the theatrical work in which the character wears a red coat, no female character wears a red coat and the color of the coat indicated the promiscuity and sex of the owner of the apartment (Farhadi, 2016, 00: 10: 41), although this character did not appear and when Babak collects her clothes from her apartment among which there is a red coat and the lighting was natural and simulating reality. With the movement of the camera, its angles, and the sizes of the shots, In the first scene, the vibration of the camera was used to suggest the collapse of the building, the movement of the portable camera revealed to us the reason for the collapse of the building (Farhadi, 2016, 00: 03: 57), after following Emad, who carried his patient neighbor, to approach a window to show us bulldozers (Farhadi, 2016, 00: 02: 58), this technique works near the building and employed this movement for more than one scene, so it became a clear feature in the film, and it is one of the features of realism in Iran and focus on the state of emotion of the characters through the medium (Vahdat, 2021) and close shots to put forward the case of revenge and tolerance that addresses the human being not to rush to make decisions against others (Rapold et al., 2017). Moreover, with decoration and accessories, the film began with scenes of the theatrical work decor and ended with it, indicating that the work is taking place in the space of the adapted work and the director employed the accessory element as an indicator element of the personality of the aggressor against Rana

through his mobile phone and the keys to his car that he left in the apartment which are revealed at the end of the movie (Farhadi, 2016, 01: 55: 02). Similarly, fashion revealed professions and the prevailing dress in the country, such as the veil, and the dress contributed by suggesting the dimensions of the personality, such as the psychological state Rana is going after the case of assault and the trauma that she faced, which was reflected in her costume, most of which are dark grey and unkempt as if she was living in a state of loss and she does not care about her outward appearance. Accordingly, the sound effects equally worked on suspense and excitement. The film highlighted the sound line through knocking on the doors and the screaming of characters leaving the apartment in which Emad and Ranaraside (Farhadi, 2016, 00: 02: 48). Lastly, Farhadi employs the montage based on his characteristic of being a container of language elements and arranging them within a smooth, sequential graphic format, as in the scene when Emad while he is in a state of mind wandering in the taxi and suddenly he heard the laughter of a woman, he moves us through the pieces on the stage, and Emad in the same case, as he plays the role of Willy, the actress comes out with the role of the Prostitute and the continuation of the laughs that characterized the character was the transition from one scene to another (Farhadi, 2016, 00: 10: 06), subjected to an artistic vision that was able to reduce and summarize with a rhythm similar to a musical melody with the change of time and place.

5. Conclusion

To put in brief, Volker Schlöndorff's *Death of a Salesman* through his vision of the original text, we can see that he shows his fidelity to the original text by adapting the dialogue accurately, working and using one of the narration techniques, which is the flashback in the text through the use of elements of cinematic language according to the director's vision and the flexibility of the film medium, which allows the delivery of the intellectual content of the text as the original text stems from culture, thought and customs, it is the same from the director's environment and the main reference in the embodiment of his vision (Zatlin, 2005). While, Asghar Farhadi's vision on the original text, we can demonstrate that he shows infidelity to the original text, he did not follow the narration technique in the original text, which relied on the flashback technique, the director employed parts of the adapted script through his conscious vision, he was able to overlap the text of the play, which was in a state of recollection of the character Willy that he did not offer his family something so he enters to a state of depression and conflict with himself, while, Emad who was born with a state of disability because he could not provide housing after the collapse of the building and the failure to protect his wife. Finally, the dialogue, as is in the case with the rest of the elements, was subject to the vision of a director, with his store of experiences, culture, and the surrounding environment (Ahmadgoli and Yazdanjoo, 2020), and in proportion to what is prevalent and contemporary also the construction of high-rise buildings, which caused a state of suffocation, as both dialogues are close in terms of meaning and content. Therefore, it can be concluded from the previous results that the study of Hutcheon and Farhadi on the interpretive adaptation is the

appropriate mirror to indicate a certain critical psychological problem in society from a play or a novel then turn it to a film as a humanitarian message to raise people's awareness, as Hutcheon claimed, "the act of adaptation always involves both (re-) interpretation and then (re-) creation; this has been called both appropriation and salvaging, depending on your perspective." (2013, p.35). For example, at the very end of the film we can observe how Rana and Emad forgive and help the aggressor man (Farhadi, 2016, 01: 48: 06). Hence, cinema should be subjected to the director's vision based on his cultural and intellectual reference, customs, and traditions.

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