PARALLELISM AND REPETITION IN CINEMATIC ADAPTATIONS
OF ENGLISH LITERATURE

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Prezentul articol este un studiu comparativ al particularităților stilistice care caracterizează romanul contemporan englez și adaptarea lui cinematografică. Sunt studiate aspectele limbajului operei literare și transformările lui în versiunea cinematografică a acesteia. Prezenta cercetare urmărește nivelul structural și sintactic al textului literar clasic și al celui ecranizat, descoperind valoarea lingvistică a construcțiilor paralele, funcțiile repetițiilor și interdependența lor în discursul scenariului adaptat.

One of the crucial issues related to the process of adapting a work of literature for either screen or stage is the capacity of the second version to correlate with the original in the matters of both style and substance. The commonly accepted view upon film adaptation is in the majority of cases rather critical and hardly receptive of the innovative elements or radical reshaping which is often introduced into the script or scenario based upon the classical literary piece. Adaptation itself is mostly viewed as secondary or subordinate to the initial source. Thus, in accordance with B. McFarlane, a specialist in film theory and adaptation, the interest in the latter, "unlike many other matters to do with film (e.g. questions of authorship), is not a rarefied one. And it ranges backwards and forwards from those who talk of novels as being 'betrayed' by boorish film-makers to those who regard the practice of comparing film and novel as a waste of time" [1]. It is quite obvious that film adaptation as a product of reshaping a work of fiction is often criticized, being treated as ancillary, if not unwelcome, to the canonic piece of literature.

Yet opinions range, as mentioned above, from harshly critical to openly receptive, and in M. Bal's view, the concept of contemporary narratology allows for the inclusion of the miscellaneous cinematic version as a genre into the wide span of narratives. The author states that referring "to visual images, there is no reason to limit narratological analysis to texts only. The narrativity of films is obvious. Film narratology is a vast and diverse field" [2]. Consequently, the inferiority label attributed to film adaptation as compared to its literary source is in most instances ungrounded, since the generic identification of the former involves several media, such as the audio-visual and verbal ones, which merely contribute to diversifying the perceptive pattern of the cinematic translation.

In addition, considerable amount of criticism arises when the issue of fidelity to the initial source comes to the fore, since, as V. LoBrutto considers, no specific or definite framework has been elaborated to perform a systematic study of the film medium. The criterion mentioned also remains quite relative, for "the tendency has been to examine film through other disciplines, especially through the prism of literature and theater, as well as social, political, gender, racial psychological and semiotic perspectives. People have acquired sophisticated sensibility for visual storytelling, although they rarely consciously comprehend the grammar and properties of the medium" [3]. Consequently, it is only by approaching film adaptations and cinematic scripts from the multilateral perspective that a critic or an amateur can perceive it as a unique artistic and technical blend of translating a literary plot.

Amid myriads of tropes and figures defining the specificity of literary language proper to any author structural stylistic devices occupy a particular niche, owing to their unique capacity of both framing a literary text and adding emphasis, as well as emotive coloring to the story told. Therefore the capacity of the script-writer to translate these into the motion picture language turns out a true challenge, with due account kept of both the structure and the content which should remain faithful to the original source.

The most salient figures of such kind are undoubtedly parallelisms identified as "the use of paired sounds, words and constructions" [4]. Parallelism is mostly associated with repetitions, alluded to as a structural stylistic device which consists in repeating a word or a phrase, often with a purpose of producing emphasis [5]. It is a well-established fact that parallelism serving as the umbrella term encompasses varying patterns of repetition and is frequently met in English novels, a trait by which most notable literary works are characterized.

J. Austen's "Sense and Sensibility" serves an exponential example of abundant usage of parallelisms and repetitive patterns bearing a variety of functions, as can be observed in the excerpt below:

*"**He was** not **an ill-disposed** young man, unless to be rather cold-hearted and rather selfish is **to be ill-disposed**: but **he was**, in general, well respected; for **he** conducted himself with propriety in the discharge of his ordinary duties. **Had he** married a more amiable woman, **he** might have been made still more respectable than he **was**: he might even have been made amiable himself; for he was **very young when he married, and very fond of his wife**… When **he gave** his promise to his father, **he meditated** within himself to increase the fortunes of his sisters by the present of a thousand pounds apiece. **He** then really **thought** himself equal to it"* [6].

The detail striking the eye of the reader is the anaphoric repetition of the personal pronoun 'he', defining John Dashwood's personality as egocentric and self-absorbed, whereas the framing repetition of the compound adjective 'ill-disposed' enhances the effect produced. The direct characterization of the young Dashwood thus becomes finite, and is backed up by the parallelisms ('he was…', 'very young…', 'very fond of…'), which adds a touch of irony to the critical narratorial outlook upon the former. Moreover, the narrator employs a mocking understatement ('He was not an ill-disposed young man, unless to be rather cold-hearted and rather selfish is to be ill-disposed…'), thus creating an expressive literal image of the character in question.

The adaptation hardly retains these imperceptible nuances of characterization, and E.Thompson's version of the literary piece delineates John Dashwood as follows:

*"A **well-dressed, pompous-looking** individual (John Dashwood, 35) is making an urgent journey on horseback. He looks anxious"* [7].

The transposition noticed in the script is definitely successful, though being curtailed to a considerable extent: whereas the parallelism is retained and sustained by the enumeration, direct characterization is, counter to the covert irony and mockery of J. Austen's style, overtly grotesque ('pompous-looking') and denigrating. Therefore, if in the initial source the direct method of characterization is combined with indirect identification of Dashwood's petty self, the scriptwriter translates the text and makes his typical features salient.

A detail worthy of attention is that the adapter's accuracy gives credit to artistry and utmost fidelity to the source: the compound adjective of the initial work ('ill-disposed') is taken due account of, undergoing intensification and structural duplication in the adapted variant of the script ('well-dressed, pompous-looking'). It is thus reasonable to conclude that, while the faithfulness to the initial literary is definitely observed in the adaptation of the novel, it is obviously more expressive visually, appealing to the eye of the potential viewer in a straightforward manner. The verbal and visual media of the adapted version definitely engage in fruitful collaboration in the script.

It is necessary to consider another example revealing the adapter's capacity of cinematic transposition and rendering the structural stylistic devices of the alleged literary work. The usage of parallel constructions and repetitions in the novel is presented in the following excerpt:

*"I do not attempt to deny," said she, "**that I think very highly of him - that I greatly esteem, that I like him**." Marianne here burst forth with indignation - "**Esteem him! Like him! Cold-hearted** Elinor! Oh! worse than **cold-hearted**! Ashamed of being otherwise. Use those words again, and I will leave the room this moment!"* [8].

One cannot help but notice the similar framing repetitive patterns containing the compound adjectives ('cold-hearted') and parallelisms, in which the relatively short verbal interaction abounds. The succession of the subordinate clauses ('that I think very highly of him – that I greatly esteem…') is again backed up by the enumeration of the verbal predicates (think highly, esteem, like) which in Marianne's response to this attitude also acquires a bitter ironic and highly emphatic touch. The younger sister reiterates Elinor's phrasing, showing utter indignation at her seeming indifference to the matter discussed.

Thus, whereas in the first passage Elinor's opinion, embellished by structural repetitions and parallel constructions, is perceived as logical and coherent owing to the succession of the predicates enumerated, in Marianne's interpretation it turns into a mere mockery at what the latter perceives as the epitome of genuine affection. However, the functional properties of repetition and parallelism remain akin to those found in the previous example. Apart from adding emotional tension to the dialogue, they help structure it properly and consistently, attributing an indirect characterization to Edward Ferrars, whose personality constitutes the core of the conversation.

In the cinematic version of the novel the situation changes to a considerable extent and is represented in the following way:

*"**Mrs Dashwood**
Elinor has not your feelings, his reserve suits her.
Marianne thinks for a little.*

Marianne

Can he love her? Can the ardor of the soul really be satisfied with such **polite, concealed** *affections? To love is* **to burn, to be on fire,** *all made of* **passion, of adoration, of sacrifice! Like Juliet, or Guinevere or Heloise"** [9].

One of the first details indicating the process of reshaping the dialogic sequence is apparent: it is no longer the interaction between Elinor and Marianne, but the one between the former and her mother, Mrs. Dashwood, that emerges as the core of the conversation. Yet the sample under analysis still abounds in such structural stylistic figures as parallel constructions ('Can he love her? Can the ardor of soul really be satisfied…') and enumerations ('polite, concealed', 'of passion, of adoration, of sacrifice'), all these adding to Marianne's profound and sincere interest in her sister's fate, as well as her utmost sensibility to the question discussed.

In addition, the rhetorical question asked by Marianne, which is aptly incorporated into her response, gives rise to another parallel construction, with the modal 'can' indicating the duality of Edward Ferrars' nature and utter impenetrability of his character, which, as the character considers, is completely devoid of sensibility. In this particular instance the indirect method of characterization, in contrast to the previous example transforming it into the direct one, is preserved, and the level of its intensity is retained.

Another relevant detail which adds emphasis and adduces sophisticated character to the interaction of the script is the succession of allusive references presented by Marianne to the famous female figures leaving notable traces in literature and ultimately becoming archetypal. Namely, the enumeration 'like Juliet, or Guinevere or Heloise' also delineates Marianne as one of the main characters possessing certain educational background and capable of passing critical judgments upon her acquaintances and relatives with ease and wit. This stylistic detail, absent from the original work, still proves the adapter's fidelity to the source, since the allusion proper is structured repetitively as a token of reverence to J.Austen's unique and exquisite wording.

Consequently, the adaptation of the novel is by no means inferior to its literary counterpart, and can hardly be termed auxiliary or subordinate. On the contrary, whereas in J. Austen's version many of Marianne's features remain covert, E.Thompson, remaining faithful to the source, infuses it with new vigor keeping account of its language peculiarities.

Thus, the issue of cinematic adaptation of English literary prose often calls forth direct criticism on the part of the theoreticians working in the field, since the adepts of canonic source study engage in a number of arguments with film critics regarding the superiority and artistic integrity of either the primary matter or its cinematographic translation. The most disputable points remain the fidelity to the initial variant, i.e. the novel, in the matters of content, style, detail and precision, as well as the structural properties identifying both the genres. Still the contemporary film specialists put forward a justifiable claim about the possibility of regarding film adaptation as a full-fledged narrative capable of literary and linguistic scrutiny owing to its capacity to encompass both audio-visual and verbal media.

It is apparent that the structural stylistic figures of the initial source are capable of successful transposition to the screen when the adapter follows the general language bent of the discourse proper to the literary work, paying heed to the stylistic devices which reflect the major features of the characters described, such as parallelisms and repetitions in particular. The capacity of preserving suchlike structural and syntactic stylistic tropes largely contributes to creating picturesque character imagery and often exposes the ideas implied by the author of the canonic piece through the apt combination of auditory, verbal and visual media.

References:

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