

Portuguese Literature, Narrative and Semiotic Construction: From Literary Origin to the Process of Adaptation of Narrative in Cinema: A Bridge Between Portuguese Literature and Universal Literature

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ABSTRACT

In Portuguese Literature we know several examples of novels that have been adapted to the cinema, from different authors such as Cardoso Pires, Vergílio Ferreira or Jorge de Sena, which show, as a process, the difficulties of the journey established from the narrative and the original semiotic construction. until the semiotic reconstruction and the new film narrative. These changes, often associated with the old concept of fidelity to the novel, characterize Portuguese Literature, like Universal Literature, since the beginning of the history of cinema that saw in literature a source of narratives and themes that, even today, remains the main source for world cinematography. In this complex process between the literary narrative and the film narrative, of course, participate the intentions of the director and the birth of a new work of art, the film, which must be seen as an independent art form, although we cannot forget the links that you have to the original text.

KEYWORDS: Portuguese Literature, Narrative, Novel, Adaptation

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INTRODUCTION

The history of the relationship between literature and cinema in Portugal and around the world has been marked by countless examples of dialogue and influence since the beginning of the history of cinema. As Kuryaev & Osmukhina write, this issue remains complex and has taken on new points of view:

The problem of intermedia, which actualizes the mutual influence of the two arts, is connected with the search for new ways of influence, the translation of one text into the coordinates of the other. Literature is looking for new ways of unfolding the plot, building text space, cinematography - new ways of interpreting the stories and developing a verbal layer of cine-text. The theme of their mutual influence became an object of close observation and analysis both among the classics of Soviet literary criticism and cinematography, and among Western theoreticians of the cine-text; research in this area has now of great importance and undoubted interest. At the same time, it is interesting that the greatest surge of purely scientific interest in cinematography occurs in the 1920-30s and the end of

the 20th century. And this is due to the approval and the prevalence of cinema (more widely - audiovisual entertainment content) in the public space amid large historical changes. Cinema becomes a way of transformation, of reorganization of the perception of a person, of his way, by the method of familiarizing the individual with a large cultural layer of the country. Through screenings, the cinema not only indirectly acquaints a person with the texts of literary classics, but also participates in the development of the literary text itself, preventing its "necrosis". Literature is becoming more and more "pictorial", palpable for the reader. At the same time, it should be said that neither the theory of cinema nor literary criticism has developed a scientific analysis apparatus that contributed to the competent and objective analysis and comparison of two texts, literary and cinematographic. Thus, there is a task in developing methodological grounds for comparing the screen version of literary works and their primary sources, as well as determining the degree of mutual influence of literature and cinema. (2018, p. 376)

In the genesis of these questions, we find an essential problem that affects the Portuguese Literature, but also other Literatures. João Mário Grilo identifies it as a premise that distorts the analysis of adaptation, since the dilution of literary adaptations is often reduced to the analysis of the film, according to the semiology of literary inspiration, and the evaluation of the argument in a logic of narrative reductionism, which leads you to a set of questions. First, we ask what is the status of cinema after all, especially when an analysis of a film is initiated in a logic of dependence on a literary source (1995-1996, p. 209). With this approach, we find a methodological "sin" with a strong historical tradition in the analysis of the relationship between literature and cinema: placing the film in the explicit dependence of the literary text. Such a perspective contains a preambular addition that affects the development of any analysis. The secondization of one universe in relation to another only allows a reflection of valorization / devaluation in relation to the starting point, making an autonomous characterization of each semiotic system impossible.

FROM LITERATURE TO FILM

We must also evaluate the alleged inheritance of the whole film that is adapted, since it entails a value judgment about the process itself, giving rise to deeply subjective classifications. According to a convention of classic Hollywood cinema, only a set of films, adaptations of great literary works, deserved to be considered legitimate and of quality, and from this perspective, cinema was only a stage of consecration of literature. Thus, Macbeth and Henry V would be "quality" adaptations of an unquestionable heritage, as opposed to Stagecoach (based on Ernest Haycox's "Stage to Lordsburg") or - to continue with John Ford - My Darling Clementine (adapted from Wyatt Earp, Frontier Marshall, by Stuart N. Lake). This classification reveals a dubious "cultural" ideology, common to cinema, theory and criticism, responsible for the typification of films and their inheritance.

This dichotomy takes up the eternal question of the aesthetic status of cinema. If in the dawn of its history, both in Portugal and in other countries, cinema saw in literature a prestigious means of cultural affirmation, it also soon found a fruitful vein of thematic and formal inspiration. Although the book and the film are disparate semiotic entities, the sharing of certain characteristics provokes the creation of links that strengthen in the traditional statute of literature. Commenting on this theme, George Bluestone states that both the novel and the film should be seen as distinct and individual entities and that each can achieve its goals with the highest quality whenever the specific characteristics of each medium are invoked and explored.

However, while many filmmakers may prefer original arguments rather than adaptations, there is a very profound cultural problem that Bluestone translates with a biblical example: Plastic imagination. Like Lot's wife, the film-maker is frequently immobilized in the very act of looking over his shoulder (1957, p 218). For this author, the paradox of Lot's wife is reflected in the analysis of the temptation of cinema to look at literature, while at the same time intending for autonomization, without forgetting that there are intersemiotic connections. This connection is proven from the moment cinema begins to reveal a fondness for narrative. Recalling one of the forerunners of narrative cinema, Griffith, Bluestone points to his successive adaptations: Jack London, Tolstoy, and Charles Reade (Zumalde, 1997).

Another side of this prism leads us to the matrix of the problem: the specificity of the text and the attraction for its "visual" nature. However, the cinematic aspect of writing can become an obstacle rather than an adjuvant factor. The director risks falling into the temptation of Lot's wife, that is, to crystallize when he looks back, in this case, at the literary text. But while aware of the virtues of all that is behind, the filmmaker must go his own way. So we will not be a new woman from Lot or a new Eurydice. And if we remember Orpheus's hurt when he lost his beloved - who disturbed nature with the horrendous sounds of his lyre - then the director can commit the same sin against nature and hurt our eyes with his adaptation, even though he has not. the same motifs of the Greek mythology character.

In this game of writing, the Portuguese writer José Cardoso Pires, for example, did not shy away from recognizing in his work the influence of cinema. It considers that literature has approached a certain kind of narrative discourse structure, montage, rhythm, and sequence, but in its particular case highlights a key influence: the visual focus on the art of telling. Cardoso Pires evaluates cinema as the most important contribution to literature, after the invention of the press, at different levels of influence, stating that the Gutenberg Galaxy consecrated the word as a sign, but the seventh art went further and gave it the Image. Moreover, the freest form of narrative construction in audiovisual communication, which often uses flashback, distortions, and asynchronies, has developed new dimensions in time and space in the narrative of traditional drawing, that is, linear (1999, p. 69).

In the universe of adaptations we find yet another problem that is not of simple comprehension or ready resolution. When a director decides to adapt a text, he engages in a chimerical journey, given that, by its strict semiotic nature, an adaptation can never be total. In this sense any attempt is hopelessly condemned to constitute a partial vision, an interpretation or a reading. As Jakob Lothe points out, the whole process of adaptation implies deliberate choices on the part of the agents involved in transposition. Such actions lead to interpretation and comparison exercises, mainly by the public, or as Lothe tells us, an adaptation becomes a reductionist process, because it illustrates a single representation at the visual level, but itself provides different interpretations to the viewers, or that is, it allows them to make a more or less positive assessment of the process. Moreover, an analysis of dichotomous contours emerges, since a film that is an adaptation of a book can be understood and interpreted in different ways by those who see it - whether they know the original work or not. However, for all who know the literary text, film analysis will inevitably include a degree of comparative assessment with the source. Such a comparison becomes understandable and given the explicit differences between the two media, the film version often seems inferior to the literary origin (Lothe, 2000).

In this line of thought, it seems pertinent the concept of intersection proposed by Bluestone. This author considers that the novel and the film can be seen as two lines that meet at a certain point, but then move away in a process of divergence. When the meeting point is analyzed at this intersection, the book and the script show unavoidable similarities, however, the divergence shows that the lines of approach, after all, show a resistance to a process of simple conversion, as well as proving its dissimilarities.

In fact, it is not possible to define or find an ideal of adaptation. There is no movie that can be identified as a perfect process of adaptation, since it suffers from an intrinsic contradiction: there is no perfect adaptation, because it is not possible to make a perfect adaptation if we think of the traditional meaning of this word. Nor would an absolute conversion of a book to a movie be possible without disturbing or even destroying the essence of the gene work. Such obstacles are markedly visible in 'faithful' adaptations of a Proust or Joyce, just as the reverse process would be truly absurd: imagine a 'faithful' adaptation of a Chaplin film for a novel, for example.

According to the philosophy of parallel lines, we cannot but invoke Bergman's opinion again, which has already been criticized by us earlier, when he states that 'Film has nothing to do with literature; the character and substance of the two art forms are usually in conflict ... We should avoid making films out of books. The irrational dimension of a literary work, the germ of its existence, are often untranslatable into visual terms - and it, in turn, destroys the special, irrational dimensions of the film »(Wagner, 1975, p. 29). Undoubtedly, the history of adaptations is tainted by numerous failures, especially when the original book is dominated by intrinsically literary characteristics such as the inner monologue, or free indirect speech, but nevertheless certain authors marked by a dimension of reflection or interiority, like Conrad or Pöe, have stopped attracting filmmakers. These difficulties are denounced by many actors in the cinematic universe, from filmmakers to screenwriters. The position of critics can be summarized as follows: 'transferring' a work of art from one medium to another is impossible. It is not possible to "film a book" so that the characters of the literary text would rise from the book and become actors before the camera. This view exemplifies the impossibility of a "transference" and identifies the temptation of reductionism that often eludes the director who seeks a synthesis of the original work and finds a simplification with its respective aesthetic costs.

Reflecting on the issue of difficulties in adaptation, Gimferrer (2000) identifies two main obstacles: the equivalence of language and the problem of equivalence of the result that is obtained, according to language. Due to these factors, the comparison between the book and the film is often the cradle of spurious disputes that forget the essence of the issue rooted in the different languages, and the aesthetic validity of the filmic work, which must be analyzed independently in relation to literary work. The problem of adaptation lies not only in the narrative language chosen to adapt, nor in the qualitative analysis of the result obtained. This last factor is manifestly more relevant at the moment when we consider the value of a movie, but of a movie per se, and not of value as adaptation. This erroneous perspective, which Gimferrer identifies, has been responsible, according to this author, for the vast majority of twentieth-century adaptations of great novels to have resulted in failures and disappointments, which accentuates the growing divorce between the novel and the film in contemporary times.

In this respect, cinema first experienced a period of idyll between book and film, which culminated in Samuel Goldwyn's effort to directly recruit writers rather than buy his books. Such a policy, however, would turn out to be a gross failure. Writers, unable or unwilling to write with

images in mind, united their voices to denounce the humiliating way in which the argument department was capable of destroying the essence of the text by removing the elements it judged into the filmic visualization and continuity sheets. (Frost, 1998, p. 44). At a later stage, the emergence of a semiotic and narratological critique that allowed us to identify lines of convergence and divergence between the two universes. For example, one of the main instances of reflection is that the relations between text and image include not only connections to signs, but also different relations between meaning and signifier that the viewer must interpret and construct as a recipient, with full awareness. that analyzes a dialogue. In fact, a confrontation between words and images about translation problems that poses a filmic adaptation of a novel, or novel of films, highlights a similar question to the translation of one language into another: what is played out in this process? It is more than an equivalence game, it is the confrontation between two worldviews (Clerc, 1993).

In this quest for an identification between the filmic work and the literary source, another reason for the unfortunate transposition is, curiously, the very statement of the director who deliberately projects the realization of a work faithful to the original. This statement of intent, as bold as it is virtually impossible, finds a perfect example in Visconti's proposal to faithfully adapt Camus's *The Stranger*. Paradoxically, Visconti's failure lies in his pseudo-quality: the desire to be absolutely faithful to the text. Because in each Visconti photogram there seems to be more details and descriptive details of the place where the story takes place than in the author's own novel (Winston, 1973), that is, the specific qualities of cinema originated a process of infidelity within of a process that would be ideally faithful.

However, we need to leave the issue of faithfulness in the past. As Barraclough (2014) writes of Hodgkins's book *The Drift: Affect, Adaptation and New Perspectives on Fidelity* (2013):

Hodgson conceptualises "literary and filmic texts as affective economies that communicate with each other and with audiences through the transmission of affective intensities from one medium to another" (p. 2), providing new experiences, new affective intensities upon the body, and facilitating changes (or new becoming) in thought and being amongst consuming audiences. This therefore challenges the predominant negative views that literary texts are superior to their cinematic adaptations, that they do not enrich cultural and consumption experiences, and contributes to the development of the field of adaptation studies introducing approaches which can, unlike ever before, account for the complexities of adaptation in the contemporary digital era of media saturation, hypertextuality and remediation. (2014, p. 245)

Creating a film from a literary work necessarily implies the construction of a paradigmatic axis with the possibilities that the source and the process offer, in order to build a syntagmatic axis that results from the choices made. The whole process of adaptation will reveal this same set of choices, underlining the fundamental nature of the film as a new creation. Innovations introduced in the film necessarily reflect aesthetic and ideological options. Eduardo Prado

Coelho, commenting on the alteration of Blade Runner's ending, in which the pessimistic sentiment of Philip K. Dick's literary text is replaced by a milder vision of the future, points to a way of dealing with Icarus' dilemma when he states: Admittedly, some of the complexity of Philip K. Dick's text did not remain in the Ridley Scott movie. But it should be noted that all changes or deletions work within the logic of the film »(Coelho, 1984). This observation means that often one of the obstacles to adaptation is the very process of the director's choices that are not, above all, true to the film itself.

The difficulties we mentioned could indicate a departure from the filmmakers as a source, especially when we approach the classics. However, these adaptations of classic works are usually prestigious, as Kaye, Whelehan et alii (2000) assume and, therefore, transposition is always an acceptable risk, or it was not true that three quarters of Best Picture Oscars were conferred to adaptations.

This view reflects the principle of the defense of cinema as an autonomous artistic system, with obvious singularities that set it apart from literature and constitute an obstacle to transposition from one medium to another. On the other hand, whether a position of total distance or limited proximity is defended, film specificity is always an argument for raising the concept of 'inadequacy', which has affected some authors such as Proust or Joyce, as opposed to Steinbeck's works. or José Cardoso Pires, for example, which translates "cinematographic" characteristics, and which allow an approximation between the two semiotic systems. However, when one defends the close connection between the words of a particular novel and the images that they can convey and subsequently project onto the screen, we may fall into a new dependence of cinema on literature.

The limits of impossibility in the phenomenon of adaptation can be measured by the intentionality of certain authors to write so that they are not adapted. Ignacio Martín Jiménez (1996) cites a study by Alfonso Martín Jiménez in which this critic demonstrates that Milan Kundera decided to pursue such a path with the novel *The Immortality*. The novelist deliberately chose to construct a text lacking unity of action, with the author's presence within the work itself, dialogue between the author and the characters, and constant intervention by the textual author through a succession of comments and reflections.

Indeed, whether the concept is more or less restricted, it remains an umbilical link that pushes all critical judgment to a model of fidelity comparison. We do not think it is right to evaluate an adaptation according to this proposal, whatever its boundary, because through the plurality of codes that cinema contains, it is not pertinent to validate one loyalty option over any other, since they are all theory, legitimate.

Thus, we think that this criterion does not per se legitimize the analysis of the adaptation process. The film should be seen as a new artistic object, which summons and creates its own self-contained world that does not need the book as a framework for aesthetic and ideological validation. However, film adaptation cannot be seen as an absolutely free exercise either, since it involves the calling of various competences, both in coding and decoding.

If fidelity was already a quality criterion in not too distant times, today it is defended not a fidelity of the letter, but a fidelity of spirit, as Fernando Lopes opines, regarding *O Delfim*. The main difficulty was not how he would be faithful to José Cardoso Pires's book, but to the spirit of the novelist's writing. This was the main thing to respect, because if I had been literally faithful to the book, I wouldn't have gotten a movie.

CONCLUSION

In the history of adaptations we have found happy and unhappy relations between literature and cinema, and on the other hand, rigorously, the aim of presenting a diegesis through another discourse is itself a phenomenon of infidelity. Moreover, as we have already pointed out, any value judgment in comparing a movie and a book results in another inconsistency, because we are working with heterogeneous discourses, which should not and cannot be hierarchized by their distinct semiotic nature.

Due to respect for the unique semiotic dimension of text and film, bonds of complicity cannot hurt hierarchies or dependencies in a relationship that has always translated into beneficial dialogues for aesthetic creation.

Recall, for example, the film adaptation of the novel *Signals of Fire* by Jorge de Sena. This adaptation clearly reveals the problems of transforming a novel from Portuguese literature into a film narrative, the issue of "fidelity", the changes wrought by the director and, above all, the legitimacy of these changes. As Pinho writes (2015):

In the film we observe a natural reductionism, which captures among the many possibilities of the text, those that can be executed, or those that can be more "salable" to the Portuguese public. Thus, the director concentrated his story during the summer season in Figueira da Foz, "forgetting" the parts dedicated to Jorge's life in Lisbon. Likewise, the director neglected many characters and chose only some of the dimensions of the literary work, focusing on the romantic relationship between Jorge and Mercedes and the political context. To this option is added his personal interpretation of the narrative, dismantling the question of fidelity with the expression already quoted, "... only being true to himself can one author be faithful to the other author". The remaining dimensions of the book are "forgotten" in the film, but the theme of homosexuality only fleetingly emerges, although with marked differences in relation to the literary work, since in the book Jorge sees homosexuality with revulsion, showing a certain curiosity. but homophobic in nature, while in the film the protagonist is more tolerant, revealing an attempt at understanding. Likewise, the position of women in society, described in the book as the submissive family woman, is revealed in the opposite way, that is, the "vision" proposed by the director is that of a woman of the nineties, seeking of emancipation, deconstructing old customs. These two examples reinforce the aspect already debated in this work, of the intersection of the socio-cultural context with the artistic piece, revealing that the director cannot dissociate from himself or the environment in which he produces a work. Luís Filipe Rocha's cinematic *Signs of fire* is very different from the literary work, demonstrating a personal interpretation, a possible way

for the narrative, in which the director carries some meanings but always from his perspective, giving his filmic object independence. relation to the object that is source text. (2015, pp. 121-122)

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