Paradigm Shift in Fantasy Literature: Screen Adaptations as a Source of Infotainment

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Abstract— In the previous two decades, young adult fiction has dominated the best-selling books, owing to its popularity and the ease with which it is widely available over the internet. Young adult fiction and high fantasy have been extensively studied in the literature in connection to a variety of genres, which also include fantasy books. Numerous researchers have examined blockbuster fantasy series in this regard. Several academics have shed new light on cinema adaptation theory or its critical examination within this area of study. As such, this study will examine the intertextual utterances seen in most significant fantasy blockbusters. The study examines a variety of disciplines, including cinema adaptations, high fantasy books, and young adult writing.

Keywords— Young Adult Fiction, High Fantasy Literature, Screen Adaptations, Adaptation Theory

I. INTRODUCTION

While literature is crucial for social reform in our culture, cinema has been recognised to be the most effective means for re-creating such stories, as it interacts in the perceptive interpretation and projections of deep and abstract ideas enhanced in literary works onto the screen as accurately as literature itself. There are several definitions of fantasy, but it is fine to say that fantasy literature has something "fantastic," something which does not exist. Maria Nikolajeva characterised a fantasy book's distinguishing trait as the existence of a fantasy object, such as a magical item or wonderful creature (113). She refers to these fictitious objects as "fantasemes". The replication of existent real objects is a characteristic of the postmodern age (Allen 181–183). It is usual in fantasy to take elements from here and there yet borrowing in fantasy literature does not always imply directly copying. According to J. R. R. Tolkien (1997), the writer who develops the fantasy realm is a "sub-creator". However, this sub-creator draws inspiration from a variety of sources: elder fantasy, folk tales, and other literary works (109-161).

Fantasy is a growing genre in literature for children, young adults, and even adults. Readers like novels such as "The Lord of the Rings", "Twilight", "The Vampire Diaries",

"The Hobbit", "Harry Potter", "The Chronicles of Narnia", "A Wizard of Earthsea", and "Game of Thrones". In "The Readers' Advisory Guide to Genre Fiction" (2009), Joyce G. Saricks stated, "[f]antasy novels create specific landscapes. These are world-building books, and it is important that readers be able to see, hear, and feel the worlds in which the authors place them." She continues by stating that since fantasy books generate a whole chain of events, they rely on the author's ability to build a wonderful world brimming with fascinating creatures and people that will wow and overwhelm the reader (265).

In terms of fantasy literature, renowned fantasists have always followed the path of whimsical writing, which was founded on mythological tales, legendarium, and early fantastical collections; this has inevitably resulted in the ubiquity of imitations fashioned as hints and nodes of allegories and citations within the scope of fantasy literature. Despite the genre's ongoing devaluation in the literary community, it has garnered substantial attention in the film industry, resulting in the production of blockbuster franchises. This research article will provide an outline of the concept of intertextuality and its application to many critically acclaimed fantasy film adaptations, including "Harry Potter" (2001-2011), "Lord of the Rings" (2001-

2003), and "Game of Thrones" (2011-2019). Additionally, it seeks to examine the intertextual references and parodies found in the film adaptation.

Adaptation can be described as "a work in one media that takes its impetus and a variable number of its parts from another work in another medium" (Konigsberg 6). Putting it another way, a book in its oral form, containing each of its features such as location, themes, conversation, and characters, will be adapted into the verbal medium of cinema. John Ellis defined adaptation as "the process of reducing a pre-existing work of writing to a set of functions: characters, places, costumes, actions, and strings of narrative events" in "The Literary Adaptation: An Introduction" (1982). Adaptation for film involves the condensing of storylines into a brief duration (3). Adaptation condenses the reading experience of an entire book into a cinematic experience of two hours.

Since the time when cinema was invented, film adaptations of young adult fiction novels, especially fantasy novels, have been a subject of study in literature. Over the years, numerous researchers from a variety of fields have contributed to the research of this genre from a variety of angles. Both literary personalities and academics favour the use of cinema adaptation theory in a variety of fantasy books and films. Children's fiction and young adult fiction have played a critical part in influencing the minds of younger generations since the early twentieth century, not just by reading but also through seeing literary adaptations. Individually, educationally, academically, communally, and commercially, this literature is important. They provide an environment conducive to the exploration of novel concepts, ideas, and ideologies. It serves as a vehicle for the development of linguistic, educational, and intellectual abilities, as well as a convenient and economical source of enjoyment.

II.   DISCUSSION

George R. R. Martin's book "A Game of Thrones" was released in the autumn of 1996 to little attention beyond the realm of fantasy enthusiasts. Martin had already achieved some success as a writer of science fiction and horror, but "A Game of Thrones" led to a more definitive transition towards epic fantasy, serving as the first instalment of a projected trilogy (which was eventually extended into a series) titled "A Song of Ice and Fire". While publishers were ecstatic to get their hands on Martin's new book, its economic success began slowly. According to Jane Johnson of Voyager, Harper Collins' fantasy and science fiction brand, "you have to remember that before the Lord of the Rings films and HBO's Game of Thrones adaption, fantasy was universally seen as nerdy and uncool" (Barnett).

However, with new cover art and the series' rising popularity via word of mouth, each volume opened to a higher sales number than the last. Martin was a top bestselling author by the time the fourth book, "A Feast for Crows" was published in 2005. In 2009, a contract with HBO was negotiated to turn the books into a television series, which proved enormously successful, resulting in book sales skyrocketing. As of April 2019, the book series has sold over 90 million copies throughout the world, and Martin has been regarded as the "American Tolkien," a term coined by Time's Lev Grossman. Grossman writes in a review of the series' most recent instalment, "A Dance with Dragons", "I thought Martin was our generation's and our country's response to 'the master of epic fantasy'" (Grossman).

As a contemporary phrase for a market, a consumer, and a stage of growth, the term "young adult" is a construction rather than a fixed term that carefully specifies an age range. Specialists explained this literary form as "In a state of flux" (Eaton 205), "vexed and varied" (Chambers 8), and "rapidly developing and ever-changing" (Wheatley 13 and Roy 2). These declarations are consistent with the same ideas stated in linked areas of learning such as social science (Stringer) and psychology, where Woodman acknowledge the 'post-1970 generations with reshaping middle age as an outcome of governmental systems in academic achievement, the worker's market, justice, welfare, and the health system that have played a significant role in redefining understanding and meaning of youth' (511). Psychologist Jeffrey Arnett suggests a model for addressing these challenges, which he refers to as 'young adulthood,' emphasising that all these transient changes constitute a unique life stage. Arnett says that this idea was quickly accepted by a broad range of disciplines, including psychiatry, anthropology, sociology, geography, epidemiology, education, nursing, social work, human development, family studies, philosophy, paediatrics, epidemiology, philosophy, health sciences, law, and journalism (Arnett 68-73). With such rapid cultural change, it is natural that young adult literature will adapt to reflect current conventions and trends. Thus, the label 'young adult fiction' seems to be less significant in this context than an appreciation for the intrinsic fluid nature of the fiction category.

In the previous two decades, young adult fiction has encroached on best-selling books, owing to its popularity and the ease with which it is spread over the internet. "Twilight", "The Hunger Games", "Divergent", "The Maze Runner", and "The Fault in Our Stars", for example, have been extensively read out by teens and have multiple translations in several languages. Additionally, they have also been made into films. In her book "Young Adult Literature in the Twenty-First Century", Pamela Cole stated

that young adult literature has the following character traits: The protagonist's age spans from 12 to 20, the character fights to address his or her issues, the narrative's protagonist is a young person, parents hardly make an appearance in the books, and all topics revolve around young adults' challenges (49). Additionally, young adult fiction delves with issues like absence of parents, estrangement, coming-of-age findings, and battles with adult authority and standards.

Linda Hutcheon exemplifies the primary purpose of her book "A Theory of Adaptation" in this statement: "[m]y technique has been to locate a text-based problem that spans a range of media, devise comparative methods for studying it, and then pick out the implications for theory from many textual instances" (XII). Hutcheon attempts to conceptualise adaptations via the presentation of several case studies and the introduction of a non-judgmental critical study of adaptations in a variety of media, which includes cinema, TV, theatres, opera, music, computer games, and theme parks. "Movie adaptation theory" is a synthesis of literature, media studies, and linguistics. Gordon E. Slethaug notes in his book "Adaptation Theory and Criticism: Postmodern Literature and Cinema in the United States of America" (2014) that the adaptation concept has "incorporated tropes from linguistic and semiotic analysis, post-structural and postmodern inquiry, textual procreation, and cultural criticism to demonstrate that adaptations have worth, validity, and integrity independent of the originals and are capable of saying unique and interesting things about culture and language" (3). Slethaug indicates here that when adapting a written work of art, numerous language and fictional ideas are used. Therefore, adaptation is a multifaceted language, social, semiotic, and literary manner of expression. This multinational editorial viewpoint is consistent with and verifies the trends highlighted before by authors and researchers of young adult literature. Although J. K. Rowling's "Harry Potter" series (1997-2007), initially intended for kids, achieved worldwide popularity and drew a varied audience of children, young adults, and adults, it was perhaps Stephanie Myer's "Twilight" books (2005) that achieved global success.

All these audiences, especially adult students, now seem to be solidly associated with young adult literature. Since the release of the "Twilight" series, young adult blockbuster sales have surpassed genre-and-age-specific classifications, with a 2012 study by the "Association of American Publishers" indicating a 41 percent rise in sales income (Boog). In 2014, sales of young adult books increased by 20.9 percent, while adult fiction sales decreased somewhat (Association of American Publishers). While the statistics do not conclusively demonstrate that grown-ups prefer young adult literature over adult literature, it does suggest

that adults are drawn to the topics, genres, and material that are presently popular in this area.

Intertextuality gradually became imbedded in studies of art, music, architecture, and photography, to name a few, but with a special emphasis on motion pictures. Since the dawn of filmmaking, they have been routinely reliant on textual works. Film theory, like all written works, has been shown to be palimpsests considering this explanation. It incorporates the traces of past ideas and discourses and is replete with relics from lengthier periods of contemplation and discussion (Stam 10).

For a meaningful analysis on intertextuality in cinema production, it is critical to see films as texts that tell tales by their very essence; this is the position taken by Robert Stam (2000), who argues that content analysis in films paves the way to text writing and auteurism. This is not just a "random slice of life" but a systematic dialogue (186). The concept of textual analysis in cinema emerged as a result of several theories' influences, including psychoanalysis, narratology, and structuralism.

On the basis of the above-mentioned strand, André Bazin, a film theorist from France, asserts that all films are, at their core, the creations of writers who, at a given point in time, using certain technical and aesthetic techniques, were able to create a unique cinematic product (Shakib 4). In this context, film theorist Christian Metz states that "film, picture, color, sound, motion, and adaptation from literature, whether technological or mechanical, make film a sort of technical intertextuality" (4). On the other hand, intertextuality as a notion has been used similarly in non-literary media such as film. This strand mirrors Keith A. Reading's beliefs of what he referred to as the star system. In this sense, the star system is predicated on the commonalities and contrasts between films, as well as on the communique between the characters' lives on-screen and the actors' lives off-screen (López et al. 1), just as the 2002 Academy Award-winning animated feature "Shrek" is a mashup of popular fairytales and other characteristics (Nurmayana 248).

According to Brian McFarlane (1996), the adaptation of "High Fantasy Literature" (which is a subgenre of Fantasy) into visual media should be made with care. This is because the issue with adaptation is in retaining the original essence of the literary work in such a way that the audience can experience it as the author intended, while still permitting for the artist's perspective. McFarlane underlines throughout his work how difficult it is to accomplish this synergy between both the original work and the adaptation, that it is practically impossible without some level of criticism from watchers or commenters questioning the adaptation's fidelity and overall effectiveness. "There is

often a contrast between being loyal to the 'text', which a more educated writer may argue is no guarantee of a 'successful' adaptation and being faithful to the 'spirit' or 'essence' of the work" (McFarlane 4-10). Nonetheless, it is feasible to effectively adapt the literary style of High Fantasy to the visual media in a manner that is unique while being faithful to the original resource and retaining part of the original work's 'spirit.'

Numerous literary and popular writers, like Sonya Harnett, Marcus Zusak, and J. K. Rowling, assert that they do not write for a certain age group and use a fatalistic approach to categorising their work. Others openly express their intent to replicate adult fiction's popularity while writing for the young adult audience. For instance, writer Liz Bankes confesses that her young adult fiction novel "Irresistible" (2013), in which the lead character is 16 years old, was "an attempt to capture the 'Fifty Shades of Grey" success within the teen market" (Bankes). The author's publishing agency reiterates her purpose, stating that the theme of "Irresistible" is based on love and passion instead of sex. It is targeted towards intelligent adolescents aged 14 and above (Vincent).

Once a book becomes a worldwide young adult bestseller, a film adaptation follows almost every time. As per the statistics from Nielson's study, the film adaptations of young adult literature have come up as the latest category in which content makers are putting in significant huge amount of money and their investments are beginning to bear fruit. Young adult adaptations are increasing their box office share, increasing by 6% between 2013 and 2014, and 43% of moviegoers name young adult adaptations as among their favorite genres to watch in a cinema (Nielson). Often, these film adaptations are promoted with fresh book print-runs including film tie-in covers. It is worth noting that many of these films, which often mirror the content of the books on which they are based, are assigned an M rating for mature viewers, along with a parental supervision guideline for minors under the age of fifteen. Recent examples are the "Twilight" series films (Hardwicke), "The Hunger Games" (Ross et al.), "The Fault in Our Stars" (Boone et al.), and "The Book Thief" (Percival). This differs from the book versions of the films, which lack categorization in terms of age.

III.   CONCLUSION

McFarlane implies that the adapter must anticipate the optimal method for creating their adaptation in order for it to be regarded effective by the audience. The proliferation of academic studies and research is a result of cinema adaptations. This article conducted research in a variety of fields, including cinema adaptation studies, "young adult

literature", and "fantasy literature". The interaction between young adult fiction and the agencies that invest in its conception, promotion, and consumption continues to play a significant role in redefining the basic elements of this genre of literature. This effect is especially obvious with the current and continuing growth of worldwide young adult blockbusters, where readers' behaviors and techniques influence and shape popular genres, topics, content, and readerships. On the other hand, the impact of an older audience of young adult fiction on the concerned organisations compels them to adopt behaviours and tactics in order to reach and delight the largest possible market. While the academic, educational and publishing communities applaud the optimistic potential assured by these varied changes for young adult fiction, there is a fear that successful young adult literary works and the institutions that help them succeed may stifle the very prospects that their growing fame promises to provide.

It has been discovered that achieving 100% successful and faithful adaption is an unattainable objective. However, it is feasible to develop a successful adaptation in most cases. The adapter-artist must anticipate their audience's knowledge and expectations, and by studying the literary genre, the adapter will know which aspects are critical and which should be stressed. Techniques like referencing in character and environment design are vital for realism and loyalty towards the writer, then the use of colour, composition, lighting, and detail will effectively guide the spectator and create a situation that should reflect the viewer's expectations.

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