

## Cultural Memory and Intertextuality: Navigating Literature, Film, and Television

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### Abstract:

*This study navigates the intricate relationship between cultural memory, literature, film, and television, presenting a theoretical framework rooted in interdisciplinary perspectives. Beginning with Stuart Hall's models of cultural identity and Raussert and Kunow's insights into cultural memory, the paper establishes the groundwork for understanding the evolving interplay between literature and cultural contexts. Shifting focus to cinematic theory, the study explores the transformative processes of adapting literary works for the screen. It challenges traditional literary perspectives on popular fiction, emphasizing the significance of cultural studies in shaping interpretations of popular culture. The analysis extends to cinematic theory, underlining the screen's role in conveying content influenced by real events and imaginative instincts, fostering critical thinking in viewers. Intertextuality emerges as a pivotal concept, linking literature and celluloid texts. The paper traces its evolution from Saussure and Bakhtin to Kristeva, exploring its role in transforming and decoding textual meaning. Thomas Leitch's classification of intertextuality into inevitable and intentional categories contributes to understanding the nuanced dynamics of adaptation, bridging literary roots and original expression. The exploration deepens into adaptation studies, emphasizing the transformative process of texts from page to screen. The discussion extends to television adaptation, challenging conventional norms and exploring nuanced creativity in adapting literary works for the small screen. Classic- novel and popular literature adaptations are compared, showcasing the varied generic identities they shape and the unique narrative possibilities they offer. The conclusion reflects on the evolving concept of fidelity in television adaptation, acknowledging the medium's unique strengths and redefining its role beyond historical and costume dramas. It asserts that television adaptation is a distinct form, integral to the contemporary digital cultural revolution, providing diverse narratives that engage audiences across genres and time periods. The paper contributes to the ongoing discourse on the interplay between literature, film, and television, highlighting their adaptability and dynamic relationship between mediums.*

**Keywords:** Cultural Memory, Intertextuality, Literature, Film, Television, Adaptation, Interdisciplinary Perspectives, Stuart Hall, Cinematic Theory, Fidelity in Adaptation

**Exploring Cultural Memory in Literature: A Theoretical Framework:**

Within cultural perspectives, there exists a theoretical framework dedicated to the study of comparative literature. This involves employing intercultural and intertextual approaches to literature. The integration of literature and culture involves a harmonious blend of distinct voices, challenging the notion of a dominating ontological certainty. Literary theories and criticism have evolved to encompass philosophies aimed at comprehending and analyzing "texts." This entails interpreting, negotiating, and deconstructing the memories associated with various cultural paradigms, both at the individual and societal levels. The shift from traditional literary studies to cultural studies does not entail fundamental revisions but rather signifies the development of an interdisciplinary approach. This approach seeks to explore the dynamic interaction between literary texts and their functional identification within historical, socio-political, and cultural contexts, contributing to the conceptualization of belonging. Stuart Hall has extensively explored models for constructing cultural identities, emphasizing the maintenance of collective historical consciousness. He describes cultural identity as the idea of a shared culture, a collective 'true self' concealed amidst other superficial or artificially imposed 'selves' shared by individuals with a common history and ancestry (Hall 1990: 69). The second model of cultural identity, rooted in 'emergence' and 'inconclusiveness,' positively reflects on the process of 'becoming' a part of a larger whole. It undergoes constant transformation, rejecting the notion of being eternally fixed in an essentialized past, favoring a continuous 'play' within the realms of history, culture, and power.

Similarly, cultural memory embedded in a work of art symbolizes both material and immaterial forms, intricately linked with the historical heritage of a community. This historical heritage is often defined in terms of homeland, encompassing monuments, shrines, battlefields, or cemeteries. These elements evoke a sense of connectedness and foster specific communal or national awareness of past experiences. According to Raussert and Kunow, cultural memory represents a sense of 'oughtness' experienced simultaneously in two places. This involves grappling with the feeling of marginalization while retaining the specificity of class, ethnicity, and gender. It is a complex emotional process, oscillating between being treated as 'Other' by hegemonic culture and recollecting preserved aspects of past cultural

heritage and the intricate web of cultural memory. In essence, it is a process of 'restoring' the interaction with roots and recovering the lost emotions associated with cultural memories.

### **Cultural Studies in Motion: Interpreting Popular Culture in Cinematic Transposition:**

In the context of examining cultural identity and memory, a crucial shift is observed from literary theory to the integration of cultural theory. This transition is particularly evident in the dynamic exploration of how literary texts are transposed onto the cinematic screen. The roots of this shift can be traced back to the emergence of cultural studies, notably influenced by Richard Hoggart's seminal work, "The Uses of Literacy" in the 1950s and 1960s, and the subsequent establishment of the Center for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) at the University of Birmingham. Cultural studies, while drawing on concepts from English literature, diverges from traditional literary approaches, especially in its treatment of popular culture. Figures like Matthew Arnold dismiss popular fiction as inappropriate for the masses and detrimental to the advancement of art and literature. Arnold, in asserting the unsuitability of popular literature for the masses, stated, "Plenty of people will try to give the masses... an intellectual food prepared and adapted in the way they think proper for the actual condition of the masses" (Arnold 1932: 69-70). Emphasizing the significance of literary stylistics, Q.D. Leavis argued for the exclusion of popular culture from the literary canon. In supporting this stance, Leavis highlighted the importance of crafting vivid and easily visualized "action pictures" within literature. According to Leavis, such an approach not only facilitates reader engagement by enabling effortless visualization of scenes but also encourages a proclivity towards fantasy, potentially contributing to a perceived 'maladjustment in real life.' In contrast, cultural studies embrace the significance of popular cultural texts, despite their criticism within the literary realm. This stance, especially in the controversial realm of high art and high value, has paved the way for parallel theories in cinema studies. While film theory and cinema studies have conceptualized alternative modes of interpreting screen texts, their origins can be traced back to literature. The analysis and observation of cultural aspects within specific spatial-temporal contexts remain crucial in extracting meaning from texts. The present paper aims to establish a connection between intertextuality in cinematic theory and literature, further emphasizing the fluid interplay between these cultural expressions across different art forms.

### **Analyzing the Intersection of Screen and Text Meaning:**

Cinematic theory encompasses a range of technological resources, including moving sound- images and their reception beyond the screen, to articulate socio-cultural, political, and economic strategies at the national level. The screen, whether in the form of film,

television, computer or web-based platforms like YouTube, gaming, mobile, or art-based screens, plays a crucial role in conveying content influenced by real events, news, or imaginative instincts to propagate social awareness. Like literature, screen visuals extend beyond character-driven plots, taking on the responsibility to educate, inform, communicate, and entertain the audience. Building upon the preceding discussion on cultural studies, cinema theory strives to establish parameters for ethical and aesthetic values developed through the representation of emotions, events, and ambiance. The cinematic medium becomes a means to challenge audience perceptual capacities, presenting contentious and complex dynamic forms and conditions. Despite content manipulations by production houses on media and social media, viewers retain the ability to conceptualize mediated content based on their intuition.

In the current socio-political landscape, cinema challenges the cognitive aspects of psychology, urging viewers to widen their perspectives and think critically. Different cinematic forms address a wide range of topics, including social issues like gender, caste, poverty, education, and marriage; cultural issues such as language, rituals, and fashion; and political and economic matters relevant to the specific space of film, television, or computer screens. The exploration of cinema's historical background requires a chronological study, but its theoretical position revolves around the ontological perception of knowledge regarding the sound-image transforming reality into an abstract form of time and space. The term ontology is applied to the schema available as a 'problem' engaging various alternative conditions to internalize knowledge, skepticism, questions of dogma and truth reality, aesthetic rationality, and rhetoric. Similar to literary theory, cinematic interpretation involves interdisciplinary approaches, promoting comparative studies among various mediums of expression, including literature, painting, music, and more. Andre Bazin's exploration of the ontological question "What is Cinema?" highlights the film as a whole unit of creative expression that synthesizes art, technology, and audience into a singular entity. The phenomenological nature of cinema explores consciousness and being through the perception of experience and movement, with the film's work incorporating elements like screenplay, music, stage performance, technology, painting, and more to create a comprehensive artistic unit. The totality of the film imparts a ready-made experience and knowledge through various modes of expression, providing insights into the world and inquiring about the nature of certain aspects happening around us.

### **Examining Celluloid Texts: Intersections with Literature and Intertextuality:**

Analyzing celluloid texts shares similarities with the examination of literary texts, as both mediums invite multiple interpretations and diverse discourses, expanding the understanding and critical strategies of both critics and audiences. While textual-based investigation appears to focus on the effectiveness for recipients and the accountability of directors and producers, the correlation between literary and celluloid texts involves a nuanced exploration, encompassing examination, analysis, and the production of meaning. As literature transitions from the page to the screen, distinct values come into play, spanning writing to directing, imagination to shooting, description to scene depiction, emotional representation to facial expression, and imagined characters to live actors. This shift also transforms the act of reading into watching, seeing, and listening, reflecting the impact of technology on audience engagement. The process of adaptation from one language and culture to another, once reliant on translators, is now facilitated by screenplay writers reshaping dialogues and situations into the source culture and language. Mary H. Snyder identifies adaptation as a dual-level process involving myriad ways of doing and the resulting product of the entire adaptation process. This approach allows films to explore literature by representing the source text in a broader space of new sign systems, narratives, cultures, and mediums, aligning with interpretation theory. Intertextuality becomes a crucial concept, paralleling the process of adaptation. Both adaptation and interpretation rely on prior knowledge and textual understanding, involving an intersection where the original work is reproduced through the unique lens of cinema. The end product aims to maintain the 'spirit' of the text, emphasizing intertextuality and fidelity.

Contrary to earlier literary theories such as formalism, new criticism, and structuralism, which viewed works of art as having independent meanings, contemporary perspectives, influenced by deconstruction and post-theories, emphasize the dynamic nature of text. Extracting meaning now involves multiple expressions, moving beyond the given text and associating with other works, a process known as intertextuality. The term intertextuality finds its roots in the works of Ferdinand de Saussure and Mikhail Bakhtin, with Julia Kristeva providing a comprehensive theory in her seminal works "Word, Dialogue and Novel" in 1966 and later in "The Bounded Text" published in 1966-67.. Kristeva emphasizes the dynamic nature of the text, challenging the fixed meaning by encouraging the intersection of textual impressions. This approach envisions each word as an intersection of other words, forming a transformed textual structure. Intertextuality, thus, serves as a literary device to build relationships between texts, facilitating a comprehensive understanding.

Kristeva delves into the dynamic essence of text, steering away from a static approach. She advocates for the 'intersection' of textual impressions, rejecting the notion of fixed meanings. This approach fosters multiple analyses in dialogue with various writings. Kristeva clarifies that "each word (text) is an intersection of other words (texts) where at least one other word (text) can be read" (Kristeva 1980: 66). In doing so, she introduces the concept of intertextuality, tracing the essence of other 'words' (texts) and challenging the self-contained nature of textual autonomy. Instead, she promotes the coexistence of multiple texts to generate a transformed textual structure. Intertextuality, as outlined by Kristeva, serves as a literary device fostering connections between texts. It contributes to a comprehensive understanding, incorporating related affinities that deepen the exploration of textual depth. This process involves transforming various references to decode the meaning of a given text.

Building on this, Thomas Leitch, in his critique of contemporary adaptation theory, argues that every text, treated as a work of art, should be viewed as intertextual. According to Leitch, even a source text for adaptation or translation is not original but inherently intertextual. The forms of intertextuality are then classified into two categories: inevitable intertextuality, embedded unconsciously and naturally with myriad influences of past knowledge within the source text; and intentional intertextuality, purposefully selecting a literary work for adaptation on the screen. Consequently, adaptation involves intentional intertextuality in correlation with the source text, absorbing unintentional intertextuality from within the source text itself.

### **Adaptation: Bridging Literary Roots and Original Expression:**

To grasp the intricacies of adaptation studies in the context of analyzing the transition from page to screen, a foundational understanding of literature is crucial. Literature serves as the source stage for transferring plots from one medium to another. Different expressive mediums, such as film, television serials, animation films, and video games, offer diverse ways of reception, placing emphasis on intertextuality through remaking. This process allows the source text to navigate historical, cultural, and social disparities, presenting past cultures and societies to contemporary audiences and making history more relevant for the present.

The term "adaptation" implies a critical recuperation, involving the recreation of interpretive frameworks that incorporate literary 'properties' and shape cultural forms into canonical productions and consumption. Specifically, in the context of film and television adaptation, it often involves the remaking of classical texts and the transfer of a source from one medium to another. Catherina Grant highlights the importance of surrounding discourses

embedded in the screen version, which significantly contributes to clear communication with the audience, preserving the cultural memories of the adapted work (Catherina 2002). In the broader exploration of various theoretical developments, the process of adaptation involves transforming the original work into a new medium, essentially creating a new original. This transformation is not limited to textual information but represents a shift from a single-track verbal medium, such as a book or text, to a multi-track medium, like cinema or animation. In this new medium, words coexist with music, sound, sound effects, and moving images.

The discussion about cultural affinities in free adaptation raises questions about the definition of adaptation itself. Despite the freedom in adapting, it still retains its status as an adaptation due to the way it foregrounds its relationship to a prior cultural text. The valorization of the originality of the first text often sustains binary oppositions, such as original/copy and authentic/imitation, through which the second is judged to be lacking. Therefore, examining historical changes becomes a priority when understanding the perspectives of adaptation, leading to the conclusion of key points in the transformative process of the text.

#### **Television Adaptation: Exploring Transformative Processes:**

Within the realm of various adaptation types, television adaptation holds a distinctive role, often focusing on classical texts. However, it is not limited to classical works, as television adaptations, in general, tend to follow a more conservative approach when bringing content to the screen. This conservatism manifests in a slightly old-fashioned technological style and a more straightforward presentation of plots compared to the fast-paced, vibrant, and innovative direction often seen in films.

Television adaptations of classical works are recurrent, adhering to generic norms and aiming to maintain a sense of originality. However, this adherence to norms can be seen as contributing to a perception of dullness, promoting formulaic discourse, and sometimes fostering a derogatory view towards the original material. This characterization of television adaptation underscores a distinct way of perceiving the medium in the context of adaptation, particularly due to its serial format, which often aligns with classical texts, dictated by distributors or producers.

However, a television episodic adaptation challenges the mentioned conventions. In this form, the transformation process mirrors that of films, exploring the textual expression of a novel more deeply and vividly bringing the novel's imagination to the screen. Notably, in contrast to film adaptations, television adaptations provide significant creative space to the writer. Writers, rather than directors, play a pivotal role in shaping and reproducing literature

for the small screen. Importantly, television adaptations, given their extended runtime, do not necessarily compromise the original content, providing ample time to unfold and explore the intricacies of the adapted material. This departure from the typical television adaptation model allows for a more nuanced and expansive exploration of literary works on the small screen.

### **Comparison of Classic-Novel and Popular Literature Adaptations on Television:**

The impact of television adaptations, whether of classic novels or popular literature, significantly influences audience perceptions, shaping distinctive generic identities. Classic-novel adaptations like "The Mayor of Casterbridge," "Middlemarch," and "Passage to India" employ advanced technologies for filming, diverging from the studio-based approach seen in films. Television adaptations hold a powerful sway over audiences, establishing aesthetic practices with a longstanding viewer base. This specific medium generates genres and sub-genres with unique conventions, such as comprehensive plot depiction, strong emphasis on dialogue, gradual character development, and a steady-paced plot. Achieving fidelity to the original text is a key aesthetic goal in classic-novel adaptations, such as "The Mayor of Casterbridge," "Ramayana," or "Malgudi Days." Television, with its episodic transmission format, allows for faithful reproduction of cultural contexts, maintaining fidelity to the original text over an extended series.

The philosophy of art and literature, rooted in education, information, and entertainment, extends to the televisual realm, achieving aesthetic beauty. Televisual adaptations, akin to cinematic texts, rely on the intertextual system. For instance, John Milton's "Paradise Lost" is reproduced on television in the form of "Lucifer," transforming Satan into the present Lucifer Morningstar. This adaptation explores intertextual identification with "Paradise Lost," weaving past and present conditions of post-modernism discourses and feminist stylistics into the serial narrative. Further exemplifying this trend, the episodic literary adaptation of "Penny Dreadful," set in Victorian England, integrates characters like Dorian Gray, Dr. Henry Jekyll, Mina Harker, Victor Frankenstein, and Dracula. This approach employs pastiche and bricolage, connecting literature through the screen. "Penny Dreadful" and its characters provide a skeletal model for 'Gothic-postmodernism,' playing a pivotal role in the analysis of gender, reminiscent of literary works such as "Jane Eyre," "Wuthering Heights," and "Wide Sargasso Sea."

Expanding beyond, consider contemporary adaptations like "The Handmaid's Tale" based on Margaret Atwood's novel or the transformation of Neil Gaiman's "American Gods"

into a television series, showcasing the ongoing richness of literary adaptation on the small screen. These examples highlight the dynamic interplay between literature and television, offering diverse narratives that captivate and engage audiences across various genres and time periods. This distinctive generic variation unfolds across literature, films, and television, further illustrating the adaptability and interplay between mediums in the realm of literary adaptation.

### **Conclusion:**

Theories surrounding adaptation evoke varied responses when literature is translated onto the screen. Film adaptation is often celebrated for its strong intuition and creativity, encompassed within a concise runtime of approximately 150 minutes. However, the change in the medium's value of authentication has cast a shadow on television adaptation, relegating it to sub-categories such as 'costume drama' or 'heritage drama.' These categories, often depicting historically popular texts, are burdened with pre-conceived notions of boredom and dullness. Their fidelity to the original, sticking to similar dialogues and conditions, diminishes interest and undervalues both the original text and the televisual adaptation.

Classical-novel adaptations on television have been associated with heritage drama or documentary presentations, slightly improving the medium's image. However, series like "Lucifer," "Penny Dreadful," "The Time Machine" in America, "Jodha Akbar," "Malgudi Days," "Chandrakanta," and various forms of detective fiction, murder mystery series, romance, comedy, etc., have changed the perception of television production technologies. The issues of close fidelity have given way to creative advancements, similar to the appreciation received by film adaptations. Television has transformed into a more exciting and entertaining medium, offering creative liberty and reflexivity while maintaining a connection to literary texts.

The concept of fidelity has evolved from a conventional approach of adhering faithfully to dialogue and conditions to reconfiguring and embracing the sense or spirit of the original text. It aims to acquaint viewers with both textual content and contextual discourses in the current society. Respect for the style, tone, and spirit of the text is paramount, shifting the meaning from age-old culture and language to new adapted domains. Reproduction in television adaptations has achieved a variety in styles of representation and innovation, drawing from past experiences developed on the source text. This process involves both inevitable and purposeful intertextuality.

Television adaptation has also conceptualized the idea of transferring lengthy works like "Anna Karenina," "Sherlock Holmes," "Paradise Lost," "Mahabharata," "Ramayana,"

"Malgudi Days," etc., to the small screen. These works might not succeed as effectively on the large screen in evoking the emotions of the literary text. Thus, television adaptation should be viewed beyond generic and historical drama, finding its place in mainstream discourse. It needs to be re-contextualized, acknowledging the specificities of the small screen medium, without dwelling solely on its stylistic limitations. Television adaptation plays a vital role in the contemporary digital cultural revolution, as Sarah Cardwell concludes, stating that "Television adaptations are not a branch of film adaptation but are a distinct medium-specific form" (Cardwell 2007: 196).

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