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Comparative Study Between Northup's Narrative Slave "Twelve Years a Slave" and Its Adapted Movie

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Abstract

Literary work and movie have their own characteristics even though both have the same storyline. Literary work reveal the story in narrative form while movie, reveal the story through audio and visual. Today many literary works adapted into movie. One of literary works adapted into movie is *Twelve Years a Slave*. *Twelve Years a Slave* is a work was written by Solomon Northup which is based on his journey life when he was become slave for twelve years. This work was adapted into movie, in 2013 with the same title. This study aims to find the differences and similarities of both version of literary work and its movie and to identify the process of adapting of literary work (narrative slave) into adaptation work (movie). The method used was document analysis and showcase the screenshot with using the structuralism which focus on the intrinsic elements of the story and comparing it with intrinsic elements on movie adaptation. This data analysis shows that there are many changes that occur in the adaptation work during the adaptation process. That was because the changes of medium and how to deliver the message be adjusted with duration and the existence of other supporting things such as the addition, reduction and improvisation of the scene.

Keywords: : Adaptation, Literary Work, Movie

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1. Introduction

Literature is a part of our life. It is a form of expression of a person that is described by words, action, writing, or language. There are many ways to analyze a literary works, such as novel, poetry, short story or narrative slave. One of them is with comparative. Damono (2013), state that comparative literature is the study of literature beyond the boundaries of a country as well as the relationship between literature and other fields of knowledge and belief.

Nowadays, there are many ways enjoying literary works, for some reasons, not everybody loves to read and enjoy literary work such as novel so much. So there are people trying to share it by adapting it into the movie or film. There are lot of film adapted from literary works, especially novel event it autobiographical stories. Many literary text having exciting story and a groove interesting, so that make the director adapting the literary works into film/movie. Sanders (2007), in book of *Adaptation and Appropriation* explain adaptation as a "certain process that involves a transition or transformation from one genre to anothers, such as the changes of novels into film; drama into musical;

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dramatization of prose narratives into prose fiction; or the inverse movement of making play into prose narrative”.

In the literary text such as novel or narrative slave, the author is stringing all aspects intrinsic about characterization, plot, theme, setting and description of the event through a series of words, which were recorded so that the reader can imagine freely and thoroughly without any restriction and in the end the reader can understand the content of reading written by the author. While in films/movie, the director tries to make the depiction in the novel or narrative slave using different techniques namely audio and visual. In generally, film or movie is a new way to enjoy the arts all it once used technology that already exists. Literary works such as novel or narrative slave is an unity problems that creates a series of problems with cause and effect factors. It is caused by the number of problems. In other words a literary works or narrative slave is more difficult when it is adapted into a movie. The description which is shown in the narrative slave are more complex and details will be turned into a simple things if it displayed into film or movie but it depending on the ability or the composition of the camera which is highlight a situation in detail with focusing particular.

Literature and film have many common elements, although the two were different mediums but both them communicating a variety of things in same way. Analysis film perceptive was built with the elements used in the analysis of literature. A basic difference in novel and film adaptation is very normal to be found because the differencies of media. So it not surprisingly when there are many literary works adapted into movie such as *Harry Potter* by J.K Rowlin, *The Lord of The Ring* by J.R.R Tolkien, *Twilight*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *The great Gatsby*, *Anna Karenina* and *Twelve Years a Slave* by Solomon Northop and others. Twelve years a slave is a narrative slave in 1853 by Solomon Northop and the narrative slave was adapted into movie with the same title in 2013. That narrative slave tells about a black captive as a slave for 12 years. Although it was filmed with the same story, it must be fulfilled many changes due to differences in medium and duration. In film, adaptation is notice as a process of adaptation of a book or play to the screen. According to Hutcheon (2013), in a *Theory of Adaptation* “to adapt” is to adjust, to alter, to make suitable. Adaptation also refer to the process and the product. Adaptation also refers to process by which an art work in one medium is transposed into another another medium. Bao (2008), with a journal *The differences between novels and films* and Caixia (2013), with a journal *Film and Novel: Different Media in Literature and Implications for Language Teaching* explained about the important differences between films and novels (including other literary text) as follows : a. Formal differences: Visual image vs. verbal sign (word), b. Time, c. Narration, d. Sound vs. Silence. All the aspects are supported both original source and film adaptation. Beside that to analyze a literary work, naturally can be started to the intrinsic aspect such as theme, character, characterization, plot, and setting.

There are several researchers that had analyzes about adapting literary works into movie but with differences title. First, Bishara (2014), examined a comparative study of *Othello* and *Kaliyattam*. His journal attempts to study an adaptation of Shakespeare’s *Othello* (1603) into the Malayalam film *Kaliyattam* (1997) by Jayaraj as inter-semiotic translation with using Roman Jakobson’s theory. Second, Elisa Isabelk Jimenez Aguilar , “ *With tears and a journey “recreating shakespeare life on screen”* University of Granada (2013). Another researcher is Neil Hollands (2002), from University of North Carolina with thesis *Adaptation of Novels into Film—a Comprehensive New Framework for Media Consumers and Those Who Serve Them*. Next is Bao Bao with her journal *The*

differences between novels and films Enhance literature teaching by using films. (Foreign Language Department, Shaanxi Institute of Education, China, 2008) . In her paper she believes many films are based on novels.

Another researcher is Zeynep Doğan (2008) from Bilkent University. In his *thesis A Passage to Screen : Adapting E. M. Forster*, Zeynep using intertextual approach. His thesis aims to demonstrate the specific narrative and representational aspects of two very-well known adaptations based on English author E. M. Forster's novels: *A Passage to India* and *A Room with a View* that challenge and reinterpret the motives of their source texts in conjunction with the issues and debates regarding the heritage film by displaying woman's sexuality.

Furthermore, beside the previous researchers before are different in title with this research. In this time, the researcher attempts to analyze the adaptation of narrative slave "*Twelve years a Slave*" into movie by using adaptation theory and structuralism approach to see the elements or structure on the novel who be adapting into audio and visual. The focuses of this study are the changes of the story that occur due to different medium.

2. Method

This research is categorized as a descriptive and qualitative method. In presented the data and analyzed the problem, the researcher used the adaptation theory and structuralism approach. This research focused in analyzing the changes of the story in the narrative slave after adapting into movie, and also analyzing the process of the adaptation. The data are presented in descriptive qualitative method and comparative. Comparison analysis technique used to compare on element to another. The object being compared of this research is the intrinsic elements of both versions. The data also were based on direct source, that is the original work (narrative slave) and the movie. In this case, the researcher reading the narrative slave, Watching the film continuously to understand the content of film , Taking notes of the important information, and Comparing both of narrative slave and its movie.

3. Findings

Based on problems statements about the differences between the narrative slave *Twelve Years a Slave* as a source with the movie and the process of adapting the narrative slave into movie take place that creating similarities and differences, so it can be explained that there are a lot of differences and similarities can be found in this adaptation process.

In the beginning of the story, Northup wrote his story by remembering the time when he was rescued from slavery in the month of January, 1853, and connected it to his own experience as a slave into narrative slave to give truthful facts about slavery, injustice, and racism at that time. Initially he wrote it by remembering his ancestors and his father, Mintus Northup, and how his father could become a freeman :

"As far back as I have been able to ascertain, my ancestor on the paternal side were slaves in Rhode Island. They belonged to a family by the name of Northup, one of whom, removing to the State of New_York, settled at Hoosic, in Rensselaer country. He brought with him Mintus Northup, my father. On the death of this gentleman, which must have occurred some fifty years ago, my father become free, having been emancipated by a direction in his will." (TYS :18)

The quotation above shows how Solomon father's and Solomon being a freeman. In movie version, the plot is a bit different with the narrative slave. In movie, the story began when Solomon had become a slave and he worked in cane plantation. In the movie, Solomon and the others slave was ordered to cut the canes as much as possible and separated the stems and leaves for replanting. Their works always controlled by plantation overseer and the master. Even in movie, the memory of his ancestors, his father, Mintus Northup, and how he was born as a freeman are dispensed. The other different thing in both version of narrative slave and movie is about the scene of young woman slave who gave herself to Solomon to have sex with, but Solomon not attracted to her because Solomon always remember his family, yet in narrative slave, the scene of the young woman slave can not be found.

Another thing that is omitted in the movie version is Solomon's friend, Robert, who was died of smallpox. It is mentioned in the slave narrative that is not only Robert stricken with smallpox at the time, but almost all the slaves who are onboard are stricken also, including Solomon.

"We were all prepared, and impatiently waiting an opportunity of putting our design into execution, when they were frustrated by a sad and unforeseen event. Robert was taken ill. It was soon announced that he had the small pox. He continued to grow worse, and four days previous to our arrival in New Orleans, he died. One of the sailors sewed him in his blanket, with a large stone from the ballast at his feet, and then laying him on a hatchway and elevating it with tackles above the railing, the inanimate body of poor Robert was consigned to the white waters of the gulf. We were all panic-stricken by the appearance of the small pox. The captain ordered lime to be scattered through the hold, and other prudent precautions to be taken." (TYS : 72)

The quotation above explains that the other horrible thing at the time besides slavery is disease. When they are affected by disease, there is no treatment or medication are given, they are left alone to die and his body will be thrown off to the bottom of the ocean. Another similarity that can be found from the original source and the adaptation is when Solomon renames Platt. Either in the narrative slave or in the movie adaptation, Solomon begins to rename Platt when Mr. Theophilus Freeman holding a piece of paper and read out the names lists on the paper.

"Very soon traders and consignees came on board. One, a tall, thin faced man, with light complexion and a little bent, made his appearance, with a paper in his hand. Burch's gang, consisting of my self, Eliza and her children, Harry, Lathe, and some others, who had joined us at Rich, mound, were consigned to him. This gentlement was Mr. Theophilus Freeman. Reading from his paper, he called, "platt" No one answered. The name was called again, but still there was no reply. Then Lethe was called, Then Harry, until the list was finished, each one stepping forward as his or her name was called." (TYS : 76)

From the statement above, either in original source or in the adaptation, it illustrates Mr. Freeman reads a list of name of the slaves and begins to call or roll them one by one. The only difference lies in the order. In the version of the slave narrative above, the sequence starts from a man called Plat, but no one agrees, then he is followed by others, while in the movie version, Platt is the last name to call.

The other similarities that can be found in movie version and original source is when Mr. Epps is angry to Patsey, so Patsey be whipped and stripped. The reason that made Mr. Epps angry was so simple, he was known as a possessive master to his slave, especially

Patsey. One day, Mr. Epps could not find Patsey everywhere and it made him angry. In the other way, the reason Patsey leaved plantation was to get a piece of soap because Mrs. Epps did not want give her soap.

“Missus dont give me soap to wash with, as she does the rest,”said Patsey,“and you know why.I went over to Harriet’s to get a piece,” and saying this, she drew it forth from a pocket in her dress and exhibited to him. “taht’s what I went to Shaw’s for Massa Epps,” continued she; “ the Lord know that was all.” (TYS : 255)

The reason makes Mr. Epps really angry is Patsey. Mr. Epps likes Patsey and often ravish her. Previously, Mr. Epps never whipped Patsey, the only one who always whipped and tortured Patsey was his wife, Mrs. Epps. That day Mr. Epps was very angry to Patsey, so he tied patsey and told Platt to whip Patsey and if Platt did not whip Patsey then Mr. Epps would whip her. Worried about the safety of Patsey if whipped by Mr. Epps, then Platt reluctantly decided to whip Patsey.

4. Discussion

This research showed how cruel and impact of slavery especially for the human rights. Slavery and racism become the main theme in *Twelve Years a Slave*. The slave was whipped, tortured even serve his / her master with sexual intercourse. In the beginning of the story in *Twelve Years a Slave*, Solomon was born as a freeman and he has a lot of talent especially in playing violin but he was cheated and sold as a slave for twelve years. Solomon always try to send a letter to his family and wrote the letter when all people were sleep. The slaves are only purposed to works not to read and write.

The other treatments that can be found in the story of *Twelve Years a Slave* is how the whites people treat blacks captive like animals. When someone is already sold as a slave, it can be means that their life are depends on their master. The masters assumes that they are in upper class and the slaves or blacks are the lower class. In this case, the master can do anything their wants to their slaves.

5. Conclusion

Twelve Years a Slave is one of literary works that adapted in movie version with the same title. *Twelve Years a Slave* is a work was written by Solomon Northup which is based on his journey life when he was become a slave for twelve years. In 2013 This work was adapted into movie by English film director, Steve McQueen with the same title. Both in narrative slave and in the movie version, it is described the cruel and impacts of slavery at the time. In narrative slave, the readers only can imagine freely about the story but when the story adapted into movie, it become real and the viewers can not imagine it again. The narrative slave *Twelve Years a Slave* and its adapted movie has many aspects that can be analyzed and this story also can cover a lot of things especially about human rights. Therefore, there are many lessons can be learned in the story “ *Twelve Years a Slave*”.

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