



Graduation project
Final draft

Title: Sense and sensibility by Jane Austen: the novel and its contemporary adaptation version (film): analysis and overview.

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I certify that all materials gathered in this proposal are my own effort

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Abstract:

This study's aim is to observe and assess the relationship between the original novel *sense and sensibility* and its film adaptations (films based on the novel itself). The aim of the study will be achieved by measuring the loyalty of specific film - as a test subject- to the novel and highlighting the benefits that might be gained through adaptation.

To facilitate this assessment, participants in my study will be asked to read *sense and sensibility* novel than watch a specific adapted film of it. Afterwards, they will be asked to fill a questionnaire then do a discussion in a group-focused interview. The Questionnaire's purpose is to assess loyalty. Meaning it will measure the film's faithfulness to the novel in regards to plot, themes, and characters. While The Group's Interview purpose is to do benefits assessment test.

The results will show high loyalty level that the test subject –film- has to the original novel, and participants will point some of the benefits they experienced.

Therefore, these results will show positive relation and consequently we encourage watching this adapted film and others, –if proving loyal- to deepen the novel's understanding and make it more joyful experience.

Introduction:

“A picture is worth a thousand words” how much do you believe that?

Apparently, that is what film producers want us to believe. This is clear, as adapted films keep increasing in number in recent years. Our novel here, *Sense and sensibility* held the interest of many producers.

The famous Jane Austen is the author of *Sense and sensibility*, a realistic novelist, who truthfully replicated the English society of the nineteenth century, with all its traditions and conventions while being a constant promoter of virtues. She is often praised for her realistic description of places, people and events. (Sutherland, 2014)

Sense and sensibility is about Austen’s usual themes of marriages, inheritance and wealth. Lots of irony of her society that wronged women. However, her focus is on themes of sense (wisdom) as appose to sensibility (impetuous passion) in love and other types of relations, Characterized by two sisters, the sober-minded “Elinor” and the emotional “Marianne” who underwent the same hardships but reacted differently. (Ladhva, 2015)

Can an adapted film make us relate to them and live their struggle as the novel did?

Literature review:

Since adapted films are well known to have some different scenes and dialogue than novels, the first thing that might cross our minds is who decides these changes, and why?

Well, we have to keep in mind that there is a person who acts as a “mediator”, meaning a person how is standing between us as an audience and the original novel. He is the producer.

A producer makes decisions in adding, cutting and amending scenes and dialogues in the original text.

There are justifiable reasons for the producer to make these changes. For one, a Novel is a narrative art; it is different from a script-play of a movie.

Narratives use words only to describe, while play-scripts use sound and visual effects, also films have restricted time to tell a story, furthermore, some changes are made to emphases or disregard a small detail in the plot.

Henceforth, producers’ do influence our perception of the novel when watching the film, especially if we have not read the novel yet.

literature critic, at Sana’a University, professor Ahmed Mansouri, explained in the alyaum article to journalist Mr.Ahmadi, that All novels can be turned into successful dramas, providing they have a good producer, who puts a great effort when deleting,

adding, amending the original text, and makes a wise decision in that regard (Ahmabi, 2016).

A good pop-up question is, Will the movie be able to convey the message as clear as the original text? And which should the producer be loyal to? Loyal to the text or loyal to filmmaking?

Andrea Wolwacz, in her essay, “The Adaptation of *Sense and Sensibility* by Jane Austen into a Film; Comments on Emma Thompson’s Diaries” Answered this question in her conclusion section. She concluded that films have complicated communication system for making and convey meaning, which is different from that of a literary text system, and at the end, she emphasized that film adaptation should preserve the idea and the central meaning of literature while still being faithful to its own art. (Wolwacz, n.d.)

I agree with this conclusion, in my opinion, as long as the main message is preserved, we shouldn’t mind smaller details, and enjoy this visual version of the novel. As in observing facial expressions, being introduced to customs and manners of the nineteenth century instead of imagining it only.

Now let us talk about one specific adapted film that I choose for this study.

I choose the film that was produced in 1995 AD, by the producer Ang Lee, the scriptwriter is Emma Thompson. This film won many awards and was praised widely. In addition, it was given the same name as the novel *sense and sensibility*. So let’s assess this winning awards adapted film for faithfulness and benefits.

Many critics and writers praised Ms. Thompson work, one of whom is Nora Stovel, English and film studies professor in the University of Alberta, In her essay titled “From Page To Screen: Emma Thompson’s Film Adaptation Of *Sense and Sensibility*” (2011). Stovel explained some brilliant changes that Ms. Thompson made while shooting the film.

For example, to solve the huge cultural gap between Austen’s time and our time almost two decades later, she made the character ‘Margaret’ more dynamic by asking questions that the audience are likely to ask, then enable ‘Elinor’ to answer them. So we may say that ‘Margaret’ acted as the voice of the audience.

The elicited notion of ‘a woman had to secure her status through marriage’ was expressed in a sarcastic way (preserving Austen’s way of writing), in a dialogue that was invented, between ‘Elinor’ and ‘Edward’. ‘Elinor’ would discuss future professions with ‘Edward’s’ then say, “except that you will inherit your fortune and we cannot even earn ours’.

this dialogue was added to emphasize women’s dilemma in being caught between inheritance law and social traditions. In the nineteenth century, inheritance laws

deprived women of inheritance with a male heir, while in social tradition a respectable woman does not work.

Another example, to emphasize the theme of sensibility (passion) between 'Marianne' and 'Willoughby', a scene was invented where 'Marianne' would draw a sketch of 'Willoughby' face. (STOVEL, 2011)

Providing what has mentioned above, we may say, that this film was faithful enough to the original text.

Secondly. We'll discuss this visual version and in which way did benefit the novel? Professor Ellen Moody, in George Mason University, in her essay titled: "A Review-Essay of Film Adaptations of Jane Austen's Novels from 1940 to 1997" explained - while including other movies-

That recent technology used in 1995 *Sense and Sensibility* film, made the film mesmerizing and have more appeal to it. This technology even helped the film to be close in spirit to the original text.

Moody also mentioned an educational experiment, which was based on *sense and sensibility* as a book and a film. It was done for educational purposes of course, under the supervision of Diana Casey.

In her experiment, Ms. Casey discovered that all her students used the film -the 1995 film- as a mean to understand the original Novel, this experiment was published in an article titled:" Emma Thompson's *Sense and Sensibility* as Gateway to Austen's Novel: A Pedagogical Experiment," by Diana Casey (Moody, n.d.). So this proves that this film was beneficial to the novel.

With all of this, we finally conclude that this film- test subject- was loyal and beneficial to the original text. Therefore, the relation has a positive impact on our novel here and we may assume that this film might fully deliver Austen's main message.

The significance of Research:

The significance of this project comes first, from the importance of the novel itself.

Sense and Sensibility is a Realistic novel, which has a value; as it might be considered a documentary of history in its replication of old societies and their practices, which makes the novel a good source of information, so eventually, it demands more attention when adapted.

Secondly, this project is an attempt to judge the best-adapted movie of the novel. The 1995 film. How faithful is this winning award adaptation?

Did it succeed in delivering Austen's message? Did it help us relate to her dilemma even though many details got manipulated?

If there are valuable benefits and enough faithfulness to the novel, then we should recommend continuing this phenomenon of adapting novels especially realistic ones.

Research question:

In this project, I'm trying to answer the following Research Question:

- 1- Can an adapted film convey to us the messages that Austen is telling us in her novel *sense and sensibility*?
- 2- How faithful can an adapted film be, to “*sense and sensibility*” original text?
- 3- What can this visual version of the novel possibly offer its original?

Research methodology:

I'm planning to ask eighteen professors in English literature departments from three universities in Riyadh city to participate in my project, King Saud University, Imam Mohammed University and Princess Nora University. I choose literature professors as they can speak and understand older English, plus they have a background of literature, so they represent experts who are qualified to evaluate both the novel and the movie – experts who I can reach-

Those participants will read the novel *sense and sensibility* then I will ask them to watch the movie “*sense and sensibility*” which was produced in 1995.

I choose this film in particular because it won many awards including a ‘screenwriter’ award in 1996.

So I can say here, that I'm putting the best-adapted movie of the novel under the test. Test it for its faithfulness and evaluating what it can offer/add to the original novel.

A link for both are as follows:

Novel link: <https://toicodongiuamotbiennguoi.files.wordpress.com/2015/10/110-sense-and-sensibility.pdf>

Film link: <https://123movies.io/movie/sense-and-sensibility-23816/watching.html>

After reading the novel and watching this movie, the participants will answer the Questionnaire individually. Then set to form a group-focused interview,

✓ The questionnaire has ten statements each statement has five choices of different degree of agreement (answers ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree). These statements illustrate some changes made in the plot, characters, and theme then ask the participants how they felt about those changes. A Higher degree of agreements will indicate more faithfulness to the novel.

✓ The Group interview will be conducted in each university separately, in these groups; participants will discuss five questions about how they perceived the adaptation in regards to Austen's main idea? And what they liked about this visual version of the novel.

Ethical consideration:

During the implementation of this project, I tried to follow the rules of good research ethics by following the guideline of "Ethics in business research" by Alan Bryman and Emma Bell (2011). For example, respect participant privacy by keeping their name anonymous if they well, give them a complete and correct information of the study, and never try to influence their decision or deceive them. Also to respect the tradition of the Saudi community.

Limitation of research:

The original novel was too long for the purpose of this project, resulting in taking a long time to read it. Therefore, I had to replace it with a shorter edition.

The sample size is small and based on female participants only, as access to better sample was not possible for social restriction and commuting obstacles.

The participants have previous knowledge of literature as it is linked to their profession; therefore, their opinions don't represent the ordinary audience.

The results in this project don't extend to other adapted movies of the novel, as we based our evaluation in the best conditions, so generalizing the results to other adapted film of the same novel will be wrong.

Expected results:

I expect the questionnaire results; will show a high level of faithfulness, and the group interview will be full of good observations, like the scenery helps in viewing the English landscape and how facial expression could express happiness or sadness better than words. My expectations are based on my previous experience in watching this film and on bases of its earlier critical evaluation.

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Appendixes:

Appendix A: Questionnaire:

Name (optional): _____

Age: _____

Educational Degree: _____

Please choose how much you agree with the statements below:

1- The difference between the themes “sense” and “sensitivity” was clearer to me in the film than the novel, as I saw how “Elinor” and “Marianne” reacted in different situations.

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

2- Although the characters ‘Ms. Anne Steel’ and ‘Mr. Henry Dashwood’ were deleted while shooting the film, I believe it did not influence the overall plot of the story.

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

3- Replacing ‘Edward’s’ love letter to ‘Miss Lucy Steel’ (dialogue and scene), in the novel, with a handkerchief embroidered with his initials, was a smart switching tactic to express their relationship in a short time.

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

4- Visual effects made me relate more to the character’s emotions, like when ‘Marianne’ facial expression swiftly went from happy to sad upon seeing ‘Willoughby’ standing next to ‘Miss. Gray’

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

5- The invented scene where ‘Marianne’ and ‘Willoughby’ reciting Shakespeare’s Sonnet together with affectionate voices, helped expressing the theme of sensitivity better.

Strongly agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

6- The added dialogue between ‘Elinor’ and ‘Edward’ - below- exposed women’s predicament in the 19th century.

‘Elinor’: You talk of feeling idle and useless; imagine how that is compounded when one has no choice and no hope whatsoever of any occupation.

‘Edward’: Our circumstances are therefore precisely the same.

‘Elinor’: Except that, you will inherit your fortune and we cannot even earn ours.

Strongly Agree. Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

7- Making ‘Margret’ more dynamic character by asking questions to help facilitate the viewer understanding of customs of the old society, was insignificant to the original plot but beneficial to viewers.

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

8- The theme ‘irony’ was nicely projected in the invented scenes, when ‘Elinor’ was insuring the servants of how the new mistress of the house – her sister in law- ‘Fanny’ was kind and generous woman, followed by a scene where ‘Fanny’ was gradually convincing her husband to reduce the money he intended for his sisters to nothing.

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Agree

9- Depicting the conflict between the previous mistress of the house ‘Mrs.Dashwood’ and the new mistress ‘fanny’, by adding a scene of the two spontaneously asking a gust to sit down at the same time was meaningful.

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

10- Reading the poem “the Castaway” in a boring manner, helped depict how dull the character ‘Edward’ was.

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

Appendixes:

Appendix B: Interview Questions:

The researcher will form a group to discuss the following questions.

1- What type of visual or sound effects did you like in the film? How do you think it helped the original novel?

2- Do you believe that the film helped you experience the nineteenth century society more? Give examples

3- Has the film helped you in any way to clear an ambiguous part that you read in the novel? Explain how.

4- In which did you take more pleasure in, reading the novel or watching the film? What do you think the difference is?

5- Are you with or against adapting Jane Austen's novels in general? Why?

Thank you for participating