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**From Novel to Screen: A Comparative Study on Dan Brown's Novel *The
Da Vinci Code* and Its Film Adaptation Directed by Ron Howard**

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Letter of Approval

This thesis, entitled "From Novel To Screen: A Comparative Study on Dan Brown's Novel *The Da Vinci Code* and Its Film Adaptation Directed by Ron Howard", submitted to the Central Department of English, Tribhuvan University, by Narayan Prasad Paudel has been approved by the undersigned members of the research committee.

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Abstract

This research studies the relationship between the novel *The Da Vinci Code* and its film adaptation. While a novel is a written work of art designed to be read, a film is a visual and aural art to be seen and heard. Nonetheless, they share a number of elements like narrative, setting, plot and so forth. This research examines how the novel *The Da Vinci Code* and its film adaptation stand as autonomous works of art in spite of their having played on the same themes and the same narrative. In the similar way the film adaptation slightly deviates from its source novel *The Da Vinci Code* in its unorthodox stance towards the issue of Jesus Christ's divinity.

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I. *The Da Vinci Code* as Novel and Film

This research intends to study the relationship between a novel and its film adaptation. This study probes into the transformation of the novel *The Da Vinci Code* (2003) into the film, bearing the same name. This research not only examines the elements peculiar to each of the artistic media, novel and film, but also those common features that establish an intimate but enigmatic bond between these two art forms. In short, this study aims at addressing the questions to what extent the film, *The Da Vinci Code* (2006), is faithful to its source novel; which elements are transferred as exactly as they are in the novel; and which elements are adapted so as to make them fit in the film medium.

The film and the novel evolved from distinct backgrounds and different traditions. While the novel emerged from the literary tradition, the film developed from the tradition of plastic arts and photography. Moreover, unlike novel, the film is the child of science; it would have never existed unless there were rapid scientific and technological developments in the 19th century. Thus owing to the facts of their different origin, these two art forms are distinct.

Similarly, the novel is basically a written work of art whereas the film is a visual art. The film communicates through the language of images and sounds. Though verbal language is used in a film, it is of secondary importance. The simultaneous and continuous interplay of image, sound and movement makes the film a unique art. The free and constant motion of the images is the peculiar property of film. In the same way, unlike novel that is understood through the concept of mental images constructed through written words, the film is understood through the percept of visual images.

Nevertheless, film and novel have lots of elements, such as narrative, points of view, setting, characters and so forth, in common. The difference between these two art forms is largely in the way of employing these elements. Along with the advent of advanced motion picture cameras in the last decade of the 19th century, the Victorian narrative tradition exerted a great influence in the development of film art. The early creative artists of film, like D.W. Griffith, adopted a number of techniques from the 19th century novels, and adapted some other techniques so as to make them fit in the film medium.

The bestseller novel of all time, *The Da Vinci Code*, by Dan Brown, was published in 2003. The novel becomes widely popular as well as controversial because of its new truth claims, the novelist's claim for its factuality, its powerful narrative and thrilling atmosphere. The novel deals with the sensitive religious issue, and denounces the canonical history of Christianity, especially of Jesus Christ, for being founded on the wrong premises. It presents an alternative history of Christianity from the side of dissident voices. According to the novel, the divinity of Jesus Christ and the subjugation of women were constructed so as to fulfill the vested interests of the then authorities and the male ideology.

The novel intends to establish a harmonious society as imagined by Jesus Christ, where male and female have equal status. It fathoms down to the pagan rituals of women worship and their influence on Jesus Christ. The novel argues that Jesus Christ was not a divine being but a mortal human being, though exceptionally influential and extraordinary. He was married to Mary Magdalene, and fathered a child by her. He used to love her more than other disciples. But this reality, according to the novel, was distorted and another completely false discourse was

fabricated and disseminated by the authorities since the fourth century AD, which continues till today.

The film *The Vinci Code*, despite being a different medium, also deals with these issues. The screenplay was written by Akiva Goldsman, and was directed by Ron Howard, an Oscar winning director for his *Beautiful Mind* (2001). The film *The Da Vinci Code* was released in 2006, instigating a spate of criticisms and protests all over the world. It was the film that made the novel more popular and widespread. A large number of criticisms on the novel came only after the release of the film.

The title *The Da Vinci Code* is significant in understanding the themes of the novel and its film adaptation. According to the novel, Leonardo Da Vinci was very much aware of the true history of Christianity. He knew where the Holy Grail (i.e. documents containing the details of Christ's family life) was hidden during his lifetime. In his time the church was immensely powerful, so he could not reveal the truth being afraid of the Church. Therefore, he revealed the truth through his paintings. His *Mona Lisa* and *The Last Supper* are described in the novel and the film to prove the case. According to the protagonist Robert Langdon, *Mona Lisa* is not completely a woman but an androgynous figure, representing male and female at the same time. It implies to the original notion of Christ of a harmonious relationship between male and female. Similarly, his *The Last Supper* is different from the painting *The Last Supper* presented in the Bible. In Da Vinci's *The Last Supper* Mary Magdalene is painted next to Jesus Christ himself. In the words of Leigh Teabing, one of the most important characters of *The Da Vinci Code*, "The Last Supper practically shouts at the viewer that Jesus and Mary Magdalene were a pair" (329).

Dan Brown, the author of the novel, *The Da Vinci Code*, is the best-known contemporary novelist. He was born and raised with a double major in Spanish and English in 1986. Brown started his career from a songwriter and pop singer. Then he became a teacher and wrote some 'humor' books. However, in 1969, Dan Brown quitted teaching to become a full-time writer and published *Digital Fortress* (1998). But it was only of mediocre success. It was his bestseller novel *The Da Vinci Code* that was his first hit, and became the first to be adapted into a film. Characters in Brown's books are often named after real people in his life. For instance, Robert Langdon, the protagonist of *The Da Vinci Code*, is named after John Langdon, the artist who created ambigrams used for his *Angels and Demons*.

Ron Howard, the director of the film *The Da Vinci Code*, was born in Oklahoma to an acting family. He was in his first movie, *The Frontier Woman* (1956), when he was only eighteen months old. Howard's transition from child actor was not to adult actor, but to adult director. Although he starred in some films like *Shootist* (1976), his dream and his focus was directing. He had begun shooting films at the age of fifteen, and after high school he spent two years in a film program at the university of Southern California. The first film he directed was *Eat MY Dust* (1976). Ron Howard, the successful director of many films, such as *Beautiful Mind* (2001), *Cindrella Man* (2005), *The Da Vinci Code* (2006), and so on, often works with the star Tom Hanks.

Dan Brown's novel *The Da Vinci Code* plays with the themes of sacred feminine, the divinity of Jesus Christ, and the conspiracy embedded in the history of Christianity. Ron Howard's film *The Da Vinci Code* is faithful to the themes of the novel. Explaining the important claims that the novel makes Robert Sheaffer writes:

In this novel, Brown makes some extremely remarkable claims that, if true, would revolutionize not only all of the Christian religion, but much of history as well. Brown would have us believe that the practices of early Christianity were vastly different than we have been taught, and that a huge conspiracy has prevented us from knowing this. A patriarchal plot by a famous Roman emperor obliterated the early Christian's worship of "the sacred feminine". Jesus and Mary Magdalene were married and sired a royal bloodline that continues to that day. (22)

Although the film also claims these things, it does not repeat Dan Brown's claim in the novel that "All descriptions of artwork, architecture and secret rituals in this novel are accurate" (Brown). Similarly, lauding the novel *The Da Vinci Code* as an icon of present day postmodern culture David Coachman in his article, " Dan Brown: What Can the Church Learn from the Pied Piper of Post modernity" writes, "*The Da Vinci Code* is an example of the spirit of our age: the relativizing of truth claims, the suspicions towards established institutions, and the promotion of interests that are seen as marginalized, especially feminism" (72).

On the other hand, Alan Jacobs finds encryption and decryption as the *raison d'être* of the novel, and attributes it to Brown's aptitude for the symbols and codes in the following excerpts:

And then, of course, there is *The Da Vinci Code*, which has encryption and decryption as its *raison d'être*. It's hard not to suspect that, as a child, Dan Brown found a secret decoder ring in his breakfast cereal and never really got over it. Nearly every name in the book is an anagram of some other name, and encryption comes so

naturally to Brown's Characters that when one of them is dying from the gunshot wound, he still has the resourcefulness to make anagrams of the messages he needs to write with an invisible-ink-pen -no doubt another or cereal toy from Brown's childhood- and even in his own blood. (14)

Although the film maintains to incorporate the spirit of the above-motioned elements of the novel, some critics criticize the film for being uninteresting. In this regard, Stanley Kauffmann in his article "Divining Divinity" remarks:

I can report that the screenplay is at the start far from lucid in setting forth characters and relationships and intents. After the film has been barreling along for two hours of its 148-minute journey, it seems to have lost the ability to finish. Three or four times in the last half-hour, I thought the film was over, only to be jarred by more of it. (28)

Similarly, attacking the film *The Da Vinci Code* severely, Richard Alleva comments:

One hundred and forty-nine minutes later, I emerged from the multiplex with my head bowed (but not in piety), my shirt clammy (but not because of a breakdown in the air-conditioning), my contacts grinding my corneas (my sense in revolt), and my spirit temporarily darkened. Only a masterpiece or a truly lousy movie can do this to a viewer and, trust me, *The Da Vinci Code* is no masterpiece. (18)

However, reviewing the film *The Da Vinci Code* positively, and explaining its relation to the novel Frank Pittmann observes:

Howard and Goldsman's movie unkinks Brown's unwieldy sentences and impossibly complex denouement, but sticks closely to the novel's talky approach, as each character enlighten the others about the early history of Christianity. Using recent speculative scholarship and early gospels that were not included in the commonly accepted Bible, Brown and Howard spell out an alternative reading of early Christianity. The story gives us a humanistic and feminist view of a kind and caring Jesus and a loving God, in sharp contrast to Gibson's vision of a God of hell and torture. Howard handles this material delicately and respectfully, trying not to burden his viewers with either unnecessary brainwork or overt sacrilege. Tom Hanks is even given a line or two hinting that he believes in an orthodox faith. (1-2)

These lines give us the impression that the film is more liberal and unorthodox than the novel. In the film Ron Howard handles the sensitive religious issue that the novel raises more delicately and respectfully.

This research studies not only how the film *The Da Vinci Code* maintains close affinity with the novel *The Da Vinci Code*, but how it sustains to preserve the peculiar properties of its film medium. Although both of them work on almost the same materials and same themes, their ways to deal with them widely differ. While the novel *The Da Vinci Code* exposes the alternative Christian history through the written words, the film does the same through visual images, verbal sound, and music etc. Similarly, both of them maintain the detective plotline and thrilling atmosphere.

II. From Novel to Film: Art of Film Adaptation

A Brief Genesis of Film and Novel

Both art forms, film and novel, are relative newcomers; if the novel is the youngest of all literary genres, the film youngest of all artistic genres. Despite sharing some elements, film and novel originated from distinct backgrounds and different historical situations. Unlike novel film did not emerge from literary tradition. Rather its seed was planted in the tradition of plastic arts and photography. Moreover, it is the outcome of the scientific and technological developments.

The film would have never existed if there were not rapid developments of science and technology in the 19th century. Pointing to such developments in the century David A. Cook observes, "The successive stages of technological developments throughout the 19th century whereby simple optical devices used for entertainment grew into the sophisticated machines, which could convincingly represent empirical reality in motion" (1). Similarly, film critic, Arthur Knight, argues that the film is the product of science, "If the motion pictures have by this time come to be accepted into the sisterhood of the established arts, there is no denying that it was always the child of science" (4).

The technological development of motion picture commenced in 1824 A.D. along with the publication of Peter Mark Roget's theory "The Persistence of Vision with Regard to Moving Objects". After the emergence of this theory a number of scientists throughout the world began putting this theory into the test. In the same year in France Joseph Niepce was conducting a research on the fundamentals of photography. Eventually he succeeded in producing a crude and permanent photograph. Then onward many scientists across Europe and America engaged

themselves in experimenting new theories on photography and perfecting those already invented. Summing up the extraordinary technological achievements towards the development of motion pictures, David A. Cook writes:

By 1896, all the basic technological principles of the film recording and projection had been discovered and incorporated into existing machines, which, with certain obvious exceptions like introduction of light-sensitive sound, have remained essentially unchanged from that day to this. (14)

However, mere technological developments did not make the film an art. The introduction of narrative into the film and the inventions of the various techniques, such as editing, art of montage, and different types of shots like close up, panoramic shots or middle shots etc., helped make the film an art. Although the great scientists of the 19th century, such as Thomas Alva Edison, Eadweard Maybridge, Etienne Jules Marey, and others contributed a lot in inventing the motion picture camera, it was D.W. Griffith who firmly established the film as the most liveliest art so far existed. In the words of Arthur Knight:

Between 1908 and 1912 Griffith took the raw elements of movie making as they had evolved up to that time and, single-handed, wrought from them as medium more intimate than theater, more vivid than literature, more affecting than poetry. He created the art of the film, its language, and its syntax. He refined the elements already present in motion pictures, mastered them to serve his purpose. (24)

Of course, Griffith invented close up, cutting, the camera angle, and the way to use his camera functionally. Moreover, he developed editing from the crude assembly of unrelated shots into conscious artistic device.

Thus the desire of creating moving pictures as in the real world is realized due to the scientific and technological innovations, and the contributions of various prolific artists and directors. At present film art almost shadows other art forms because of its liveliest and dynamic nature.

Novel, on the other hand, was originated from the literary tradition. There is no consensus on the question when the novel exactly began. Prose narratives were in vogue around the second century B.C, which were written in Greek to be enjoyed by the people of wealth and leisure. Later, Renaissance saw the rise of long prose story encouraged by the growing numbers of literate people and the invention of printing press. Novel is also indebted to “romance” of the late Middle Ages for its narrative. Actually, the form “novel” in most European languages is derived from the medieval form called “romance”. However, the English name for the form is derived from Italian term “novella” which meant a short tale in prose. But these earlier works of narrative lack certain essential qualities we expect in the modern novel: credible characters, some of them drawn round; psychological depth; some attention to the larger fabric of the society in which the events take place; and descriptive detail, at least enough to make us feel that we are witnessing the actual. Nevertheless, some of the surviving fragments of *The Satyricon* by first century Roman writer Petronius and Miguel Cervantes’s *Don Quixote* are closer to modern novel.

The modern novel is said to be emerged in England in the early 18th century along with Daniel Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe* (1719). However, this work is only episodic, and lacks the organized plot. That is why the credit of being the first modern

novel goes to Samuel Richardson's *Pamela; or Virtue Rewarded*. Along with the popularity of Richardson's *Pamela*, the trend of writing novels increased, and reached its apogee in the Victorian period. And it is equally popular and the most practiced literary genre of the 20th century. Arguing for the novel's dynamic quality, and reason for its popularity Mikhail Bakhtin writes, "The novel, after all, has no canon of its own. It is by its very nature, not canonic. It is plasticity itself. It is genre that is ever questing, ever examining itself and subjecting its established forms to review" (855).

Film and Novel as Distinct Art Forms

When the film was in its cradle, it was not considered as an art form; it was only a sight-seeing tour for the audience. Film was originally expected to bring the evolution of photography to satisfy the old age desire to picture the things moving. By 1895 this desire materialized. But the film was far behind to establish itself as an art form. Commenting on the emergence of film art Erwin Panofsky observes, "It was not an artistic urge that gave rise to the discovery and gradual perfection of new technique; it is rather technical invention that gave rise to the discovery and the gradual perfection of the new art "(233).

The early moving pictures were only of the public places, of the scenes and the group of people moving in diverse directions. It was George Melies, who first introduced some artistic flavor in his moving pictures. His fantastic or artistic scenes and the reproduction of theatrical scenes helped make a film, in the words of Kraucauer, "A special genre that differs entirely from the customary views supplied by cinematograph- street scenes or the scenes of everyday life" (Basic Concepts, 14). However, D.W. Griffith is the man who established film as a full-fledged artistic genre. Arthur Knight, lauding Griffith's achievements, remarked that he made a film "a vigorous, eloquent, independent art" (30).

Since the introduction of narrative in the films, the films and the novels have maintained close affinity, and have constantly influenced each other. Yet, both of them are distinct art forms, having their own unique properties and peculiar features. The film and the novel are distinct artistic media in their treatment of time and space, in their language, in their way to communicate, in the way the audiences/ readers understand these media. The film is primarily a visual art, and then only an aural art. According to German dramatist and essayist Lessing, the visual arts organize their materials spatially while the literary arts like novels organize their materials temporally. After him film theorists attempted to discover the characteristics of film medium, pointing out those subjects, materials, procedures, and effects that are truly cinematic and those they are not. According to Panofsky, "An art ought to exploit the 'unique and specific' possibilities of its medium, and in the film medium these can be defined as 'dynamization of space' and 'specialization of time'" (235).

By that he means that, unlike in theater where the space is static and the spatial relation of the audience to the spectacle is unalterably fixed, in the movies the spectator is aesthetically in permanent motion as his eye identifies itself with lens of camera, which permanently shifts in distance and direction. As movable as spectator is the space presented to him. Not only bodies move in space, but also space itself does move, approaching, receding, turning, dissolving and recrystalizing as it appears through the controlled locomotion and focusing of the camera and through the cutting and the editing of the various shots.

Similarly, Siegfried Kracauer opines that the film is a distinct medium in that "it represents reality as it evolves in time, and that it does so with the help of cinematic techniques and devices"(The Establishment of Physical Existence, 249). For him such cinematic techniques and devices are the movements, such as chase and

dancing, its ability to bring the inanimate to the fore and make it a carrier of the action and to convey small and large objects through close up and long shots. But according to Gerald Mast et. al.:

Stanley Cavell does not think that the aesthetic possibilities of the movie medium cannot be deduced from its physical or technical properties. A medium for him is simply something through which something specific gets said or done in particular ways. In his view, only the art itself, and not a mere consideration of its physical medium, can discover its aesthetic possibilities. (230)

The lines make it clear that a work of art becomes distinct by its own unique artistic features, not by its physical properties.

The film and the novel differ in their relation to time. A novel generally deals with the past; it is recounting of the past events and experiences. A novel is closely related to the past because narrative is the form of fictional prose, and the essence of narrative form is the past remembered as history. But the film is shot in the present. Distinguishing the relation of the novel and film with time George W. Lindon explains in his book *Reflection on Screen*:

Unlike the novel, however, film does not so much pose a world as expose one. It takes us, transports us, into a land of 'once upon a time', and then returns us to our common world. But because of the peculiar nature of time and space in film, because it collapses into a fluid present, film's 'once upon a time' is now. Novel is the remembrance of the things past; a film is the remembrance of things present. (32)

In fact, the novel is a narrative that deploys past events moving towards a present. Although a novel can deal with present, it is still written and experienced in the reflective mode, and hence never reaches the present. A film, on the other hand, never reaches the past even if it apparently deals with the past events. To quote George Linden further, "Where the novelist describes, a director shoots; where the novelist is forced to explain, a director exhibits. Thus, while the novelist constructs the present as past, the director presents the past as present" (32).

In the same way, the film is different from novel in its relation to space. Describing the ways the two media treat the space George W. Lindon writes:

The space of the novel is a construct of words; it is a space that is engendered by imagination of the reader, one he has become moved by description to envision. The space of film, however, is immediately given to the eye by flickering visual images. Both the novel and film tell the stories, but one tells by saying and the other by presenting. (34)

By this description, we can conclude that the novel is primarily a representational medium whereas the film is primarily a presentational medium.

Similarly, the film is unique art in its quality of free and constant motion. Actually, the name motion picture is derived from the pictures' very nature of moving rapidly from one frame to the next. A motion picture moves continuously in time and space. There is the simultaneous and continuous interplay of images, sound and movements in the film. Pointing out the uniqueness of film medium from other artistic media in terms of its free and constant motion Joseph M. Boggs and Dennis W. Petrie write in their book *The Art of Watching Films*:

The continuous interplay of sight, sound and motion allows film to transcend the static limitations of painting and sculpture. Film surpasses drama in its unique capacity for revealing various points of view, portraying action, manipulating time, and conveying a boundless sense of space. Unlike the stage play, film can provide a continuous, unbroken flow, which blurs and minimizes transitions without compromising the story's unity. Unlike the novel and the poem, film communicates directly, not through abstract symbols like words on a page but through concrete images and sounds. (2)

Another particular difference that makes the film and the novel distinct art forms is the percept of visual image in film and the concept of mental image in novel. In film the percept of visual image predominates. This visual depiction of events provoke emotion, and this provoking of emotion finally leads to an idea or understanding of the subject. But in novel the reader withdraws temporarily into a private or unreal world, participates in the events being read, and sees imaginatively through mind. Contrasting the ways audiences/ readers understand these two media Dudley Andrew mentions:

Generally film is found to work from perception toward signification, from external facts to interior motivations and consequences, from givenness of a world to the meaning of a story cut out of that world. Literary fiction works oppositely. It begins with signs (graphemes and words) building to propositions, which attempt to develop perception. As a product of human language it naturally treats human motivation and values, seeking to throw them out onto the external world, elaborating a world out of a story. (424)

Likewise, the novel and the film are different in terms of the experience of the readers/ viewers. Unlike movie watching, novel reading is a singular experience in the sense that one usually reads novel alone and that in novel only one sense, i.e. vision, is usually involved. One reads novel silently, creating the entire imaginary world through the written symbols. But the movie watching is a collective experience.

Language and Semiotics of Film

Language is the system of codes/signs. While the language of novel (i.e. of literature) consists of phonetic or orthographic symbols, film language is made up of verbal as well as non-verbal codes. Film speaks in the language of senses, and the dramatic power of image is extremely important in film. Like verbal or literary language, film language is made up of images and sounds arranged in a certain way so as to generate certain meaning. Charles Eidsvik in his study “Cinema and Literature” explains how the pattern of shots in a film resembles the syntax of verbal language:

The pattern of arranging shots in their “standard” sequence resembles the syntax patterns of speech. A shot establishes the subject; a medium shot conveys the important action, and a close up shows what happened to the “object” in the film sentence. A periodic sentence pattern is achieved by placing the “establishing shot” last in the pattern. The fade-out fade-in signifies a “paragraph” or chapter division. The break between the shots in a sequence means roughly the same thing as comma. Film syntax involves the distribution of images in a sequence; the sequences frequently resemble the distributional system of the verbal language of the filmmaker. (44-45)

In the beginning, film language was purely iconic. But the introduction of narrative techniques in the film demanded the development of the various codes to denote narrative progression. The rules and conventions constitute the essence of film language and allow us to explain the procedures by which cinema denotes such narrative phenomena as successively, priority, temporal breaks, and spatial continuity.

A film has complex system of verbal and non-verbal codes. According to Christian Metz:

The cinema is a composite language at the very level of its matter of expression. Not only does it have several codes but also several languages in some way are already contained in it. These languages are distinguished among themselves by their physical definition: moving pictures arranged in sequence, phonetic sounds, and musical noise. (Qtd in Stephen 267)

Metz, a best-known film semiotician, is of the view that a film is like a language because it communicates like verbal or written language, using its own codes and conventions. According to Metz, film has no words as some film semioticians claimed. He compares a shot not with a word but with a sentence. Unlike in verbal language where there is distance between the signifier and the signified, in film language the signified cannot be disengaged from the signifier. For instance, in a movie sadness is not the concept 'sadness', but a child weeping or a man wailing. That is, in a movie sadness is not a concept but an actual situation or attribute of a specific person.

In the film, language analysis -- Ferdinand de Saussure's formulation of syntagmatic and paradigmatic relationships between or among the codes/ signs --is

applicable. Like verbal language, film language communicates in two ways: syntagmatically and paradigmatically. A syntagma is a unit of actual relationship; thus syntagmatic relationships result when the units in the filmic chain follow each other in order. A paradigm, on the other hand, is unit of potential relationships; thus paradigmatic relationships are associative, not sequential. They are not concerned with the order of the links in the chain, but with the meanings we associate with them. Since paradigmatic relationships are independent of the order in which the events occur, they can also exist between scenes taking place at different times within a film.

But it is not easy to analyze film language because it is a composite language, consisting of various types of visual and aural codes. Cautioning us to be careful in the course of film language analysis Bernard F. Dick in his book *Anatomy of Film* writes:

It is not enough for semioticians simply to isolate syntagmas and paradigms; the movie relays its messages through codes that the filmmaker used and that the semiotician must now construct. There are all kinds of codes: codes of dress, color, lighting and so forth. (333)

The Bond Between Film and Novel

Despite being different in the medium, the film and the novel have close affinity since the time of film's birth as an art form. First of all, both are narrative works of art; the narrative is the backbone of them. According to Keith Cohen, "narrative is the most solid median link between novel and cinema, the most pervasive tendency of both verbal and visual languages" (qtd. in Dudley 425). Giving the momentous status to the fact of merging cinema and narrativity Christian Metz in

his essay "Some Points in the Semiotics of Cinema" writes, "the merging of the cinema and narrativity was a great fact, which was by no means predestined – nor was it strictly fortuitous. It was a historical and social fact" (169).

Refuting those critics who claimed that the film and the drama are more similar than the film and novel, Gerald Mast et. al. argue:

Indeed, it is not implausible to argue, as Bazin and Sontag have, that the film's deepest affinities with the novel, not with the play. The novel is cinematic in its fluid handling of time and space, in its focused narrative control, in its ability to alternate description with dialogue, and even in the privacy and isolation of its audience. (353)

Similarly, Susan Sontag in her study found the affinity between these art forms in terms of their way to manipulate time and control the attention of the reader or viewer in the following excerpts:

Like the novel, the cinema presents us with a view of the action, which is absolutely under the control of director (writer) at every moment. Our attention cannot wander about the screen, as it does about the stage. When the camera moves, we move, when it remains still we are still. In a similar way novel presents a selection of the thoughts and descriptions, which are relevant to the writer's conception, and we must follow these serially, as the author leads us; they are not spread out, as a background, for us to contemplate in the order we choose, as in painting or the theater. (243-44)

Next similarity between novel and film lies in the novelistic intention of a writer and the cinematic intention of a director. The often-quoted statements of Joseph Conrad

and D.W. Griffith are apt to mention to the point in case. Joseph Conrad, stating his novelistic intention remarks "My task which I am trying to achieve is, by powers of written words, to make you hear, to make you feel- it is before all to make you see" (qtd. in Brian 3). The same idea echoes in D.W. Griffith's statement that, "The task I am trying to achieve is above all to make you see" (qtd. in Brian 4). The difference is only in the way of seeing in the words of George Bluestone "between the percept of visual image and the concept of mental image" (1).

In spite of the difference in their way of presentation, the languages of film and novel have underlying similarity. That is, the function of every type of language is to communicate, and the both languages are doing the same. Moreover, film language consists of verbal and/or written language. While the novel is made up of words, and the words can conjure up anything- images, ideas, feelings, qualities, things etc, the film is made up of any images with some words, sound and music, and it is very visual and compelling. Film uses many codes and techniques such as camera angles, panning, lighting, and the speed of cuts, color, association of images and so forth- to get it's meaning across. However, these are not in the novel.

In this way, film and novel share a number of features like narrative, characters, points of view, setting and so forth. For that reason Sergei Eisenstein finds cinematic qualities in Charles Dicken's novels:

Perhaps the secret lies in Dicken's (as well as cinema's) creation of an extraordinary plasticity. The observation in the novels is extraordinary- as is their optical quality. The characters of Dickens are rounded with means as plastic and slightly exaggerated, as are screen heroes today. (396)

Art of Film Adaptation

Almost all the best - selling novels have been adapted into films. Adaptation does not mean simply to change a novel /play into film. An adaptation is a work in one medium that derives its impulse as well as a varying number of its elements from a work in different medium. Sometimes adaptations are loose, borrowing a general situation, an episode, a character, or even a title as the inspiration for the work whereas sometimes adaptations try to be 'literal', presenting the original story, characters, and even dialogue as exactly as possible. But, film being a separate medium with its own aesthetics and techniques, the original work must be transformed into what is essentially a different and unique form. Joseph M. Boggs and Dennis W. Petrie suggest us to keep in mind the following things to judge a film adaptation fairly:

Although a novel, a film, or a play can tell the same story, each medium is a work of art in its own right, and despite some properties that all three share, each medium has its own distinctive techniques, conventions, consciousness and viewpoint. (370)

According to them, in the process of adaptation there come changes not only in medium but also in the creative minds. Therefore they are some kinds of creative shift in almost all kinds of adaptations. So, it is incorrect to expect an exact carry-over from one medium to another when different creative artists are involved.

Similarly, some critics and screenwriters take adaptation as a creative art. For instance, De Witt Bodeen, a well-known scriptwriter opines in his "The Adapting Art", "Adapting literary works to film, without doubt, a creative undertaking but the

task requires a kind of selective interpretation, along with the ability of recreate and sustain an established mood" (349).

The most frequent and most tiresome discussion of adaptation concerns with fidelity issue because in this the original work becomes the standard against which the film version is compared. According to Brian McFarlane, "Fidelity criticism depends on a notion of the text as having and rendering up to the (intelligent) reader a single, correct 'meaning' which the filmmaker has either adhered to or in some sense violated or tampered with" (8). The fidelity of adaptation is conventionally treated in relation to the 'letter' and 'spirit' of the text. The 'letter' would appear to be within the reach of cinema for it can be emulated in mechanical fashion. It includes aspects of fiction generally elaborated in any film script: the characters and their interrelation, the geographical, sociological and cultural information providing the fictional context, and the basic narrative aspects that determine the point of view of the narrator. More difficult is the fidelity to the 'spirit' since it is to find the stylistic equivalents of the original tone, values, imagery and rhythm.

Explaining the reason of difficulty to maintain fidelity to 'spirit' Brian McFarlane writes:

It involves not merely parallelism between novel and film but between two or more readings of a novel, since any given film version is able only to aim at reproducing the filmmaker's reading of the original and to hope that it will coincide with that of many other readers or viewers. Since such coincidence is unlikely, the fidelity approach seems doomed enterprise and fidelity criticism unilluminating. (9)

Moreover, arguing against fidelity approach he states:

Insistence on fidelity has led to a suppression of potentially more rewarding approaches to the phenomenon of adaptation. It tends to ignore the idea of adaptation as an example of convergence among the arts, perhaps a desirable- even inevitable- process in a rich culture; it fails to take into serious account what may be transferred from novel to film as distinct from what will require more complex processes of adaptation; and it marginalizes those production determinants which have nothing to do with novel but they maybe powerfully influential film. (10)

McFarlane prefers other approaches of adaptations, such as intertextuality, to fidelity approach. For him, "Modern critical notions of intertextuality represent a more sophisticated approach, in relation to adaptation, to the idea of the original novel as a resource" (10). In this regard, Christopher Orr remarks, "Within the critical context (i.e. of intertextuality), the issue is not whether the adapted film is faithful to its source , but how the choice of the specific source and how the approach to that source serves the film's ideology" (72).

Similarly, Geoffrey Wagner suggests three possible categories, which pose challenge to the hegemony of fidelity approach. The first of Wagner's three categories is transposition "in which a novel is given directly on the screen with a minimum apparent interference"(qtd. in Brian 10). His second category is the commentary "where an original is taken and either purposely or inadvertently altered in some respect" (qtd. in Brian 10). And the last one is what he calls analogy "which must represent a fairly considerable departure for the sake of making another work of art"(qtd. in Brian 11).

On the other hand, various kinds of actual relations exist between film and novel; some of which are amenable to adaptation while some others are not. To analyze film adaptation of novel more clearly, we must examine the specific challenges posed by each medium. So, we should take the various techniques, such as narrative techniques, point of views, and the treatment of time and subject matter- of both art forms into consideration.

In the novel as well as the film the narrative plays a central role. Christian Metz, discussing film narrative, writes: "Film tells us continuous stories; it 'says' things that could be conveyed also in languages of words; yet it says them differently. There is a reason for the possibility as well as for the necessity of adaptation" (qtd. in Brian 12).

In this regard we can say that the most striking common feature of novel and film is the potential and propensity for narrative. It is not only the chief transferable element but most of the criticisms written about films adapted from novels have emerged from the perceptions of tampering with the original narrative. In the opinion of Brian McFarlane:

Such dissatisfactions resonate with a complex set of misapprehensions about the workings of narrative in the two media, about the irreducible differences between the two, and from the failure to distinguish what can from what cannot be transferred. (12)

By this he means that before discussing about adaptation a distinction should be made between what may be transferred from one narrative medium to another and what necessarily requires adaptation proper.

Roland Barthes' distinction between distributional functions and integrational functions of a narrative is valuable in sorting out what may be transferred (from novel to film) from that which only be adapted. The distributional functions denote to actions and events which are strung together linearly throughout the text while the integrational functions refer to more or less diffuse concept which nevertheless necessary to the meaning of the story. The most important kinds of transfer possible from novel to film are located in the distributional functions rather than in the intergrational functions.

In the same way, another distinction should be made between various narrative modes that appear in the novel, which are difficult to sustain in film narrative. The point of view controls and dictates the form and shape of a literary work and determines its emphasis, tone, strengths and limitations. Novelistic narrative modes consists of the first person point of view, third person omniscient point of view, third person limited point of view, dramatic or objective point of view, and stream of consciousness. Among these five points of view possible in the novel, the omniscient, the third person limited, and stream of consciousness require the narrator to look inside a character's mind to see what he/she is thinking. They all stress the thoughts, concepts or reflections of a character, which are difficult to depict cinematically. These three points of view have no natural cinematic equivalents.

George Bluestone discusses this problem in his *Novels Into Film*:

The rendition of mental states – memory, dream, and imagination - cannot be adequately represented by film as language [...]. The film, by arranging external scenes for our visual perception, or by presenting us with dialogue, can lead us to infer thought. But it cannot show us thought directly. It can show us characters thinking, feeling

and speaking, but it cannot show us their thoughts and feeling. A film is not thought, it is perceived. (47-48)

Similarly, three of the novelistic points of view, namely first person, omniscient and third person limited, make us aware of the narrator. This sense of narrator can be imposed on a film through voice over narration added to the soundtrack. But it is not natural cinematic element. In film we simply see the story unfold. That is why the dramatic point of view is the only literary point of view that can be directly translated into cinema.

Likewise, due to the limitations imposed on the length of a film and on the amount of material it can successfully treat, a film is forced to suggest pictorially a great many things that a novel can explore in more depth. The novelist and screenwriter William Goldman sums up the problem this way:

When people say, "Is it like the book?" the answer is, "There has never in the history of the world been a movie that's really been like the book." Everybody says how faithful *Gone With The Wind* was. Well, *Gone with the Wind* was a three and a half hour movie, which means you are talking about maybe a two hundred-page screenplay of a nine hundred-page novel in which the novel has, say, five hundred words per page; and the screenplay has maybe forty, maybe sixty, depending on what's on the screen, maybe one hundred and fifty words per page. But you are taking a little, teeny slice; you are just extracting little teeny essences of scenes. All you can ever be in an adaptation is faithful in spirit. (qtd. in Boggs and Petrie 380)

To conclude, apart from these elements proper attentions should be given to other novelistic elements, such as summary of the character's past, literary past tense, descriptive details and so forth, while analyzing film adaptation of novels.

Film as Hybrid and Corporate Art

In the beginning of the 20th century a new art form, namely film, rose to prominence. It borrowed from older arts and shared characteristics with them along with its development. Early as 1915 film used to be compared to paintings, but in recent times these comparisons have been extended to all the other arts. In short, like opera, a film is a hybrid art. Like opera that draws on other arts like theater, painting, music, dance and mime, film can draw on all of these; it is also an outgrowth of another art, photography. Joseph M. Boggs and Dennis W. Petrie have expressed film's hybrid quality in their book *The Art of Watching Film*:

Film enjoys the compositional elements of the visual arts: line, form, mass, volume, and texture. Like painting and photography, film exploits the subtle interplay of light and shadow. Like sculpture, film manipulates three-dimensional space. But like, pantomime, film focuses on moving images, and as in dance, the moving images in film have rhythm. The complex rhythms of film resemble those of music and poetry, and like poetry in particular, film communicates through imagery, metaphor and symbol. Like the drama, film communicates visually and verbally: visually through action and gesture; verbally through dialogue. Finally, like the novel, film expands or compresses time and space, traveling back and forth freely within their wide borders. (2)

Unlike novel, film is a corporate art and a single person cannot be held responsible for its production. It is a technological art and no other art form interposes technical know-how between the artist and its audience. In other words, film is a collaborative work in that it requires the talents of a vast number of specialists. In this regard Gerald Mast et. al. *Film Theory and Criticism* write, "Panofsky specially compares the making of a film to a building of a cathedral, for the cathedral was built for the greater glory of God and was the result of the collective labor of as many specialists as a Hollywood film" (580). Thus, a cinema is a collaborative work of a director, a scriptwriter, a cameraman, a producer and many more people, who give the final shape of a film.

In this way, novel and film, despite sharing a number of elements, are distinct work of art. Both of them are narrative works of art, having characters, plot, setting, dialogue and so on. But the narrative unfolds essentially in different ways in these two works of art. While the narrative of novel unfolds through written words (i.e. description and sometimes dialogues), the narrative in the film unfolds through actions and images. The film is basically a visual work of art. Similarly, they treat time and space differently. That is, the novel generally deals with past events and the film is shot in the present. In the same way, the novel is primarily a representational medium whereas the film is primarily a presentational medium. Moreover, the film is unique medium in its constant motion. There is a continuous interplay of sight, sound and motion in the film. So, while examining the film adaptation of the novel, we should take all these things into consideration. We should consider what elements of the novel can be transferred as they are to the film and what elements should be adapted.

III. *The Da Vinci Code*: From Narrative to Audio-Visual

Thematic Aspects

Irrespective of their being distinct artistic media, the novel *The Da Vinci Code* and its film adaptation move around the same central themes, such as the issues of feminism, divinity of Jesus Christ, and the harmony between the sexes. These themes are explored in both the art forms by decoding and deciphering various codes and obliterated historical records. Although the film adaptation seems to take a bit soft approach regarding the issue of Jesus Christ's divinity, other themes are presented as vigorously as in the novel. Similarly, the film as well as the novel resonates the dissident voice of Christian history, and privileges it so as to challenge the hegemony of the long established mainstream history. It explicitly claims that the entire history of Christianity so far learnt is a complete fabrication. In the words of Leigh Teabing, one of the most important characters of *The Da Vinci Code*, "[...] almost every thing our fathers taught us about Christ is false" (318). The prominent themes that the novel as well as the film deals with are analyzed categorically in the following sub topics:

Feminist Voice

The Da Vinci Code decries against the subjugation of women, and attempts to restore their privileged position that existed in the ancient pagan era. According to it, there was a period when women were worshipped, and the womanhood was considered to be sacred. But, around the fourth century A.D. the authorities, which were essentially male, constructed the concept of 'original sin' so as to subordinate the women. As Dan Brown explains in the novel:

The power of the female and her ability to produce life was once very sacred, but it posed a threat to the rise of predominantly male church, and so the sacred feminine was demonized and called unclean. It was man, not God, who created the concept of "original sin", whereby Eve tasted the apple and caused the downfall of the human race.

Woman once the sacred giver of life was now the enemy. (321-22)

Similarly, deploring the distortion of historical truth by Christian Genesis Brown says:

[...] that this concept of woman as life bringer was the foundation of ancient religion. Childbirth was mystical and powerful. Sadly Christian philosophy decided to embezzle the female's creative power by ignoring biological truth and making man the creator. Genesis tells us that Eve was created from Adam's rib. Women became an offshoot of man. And, a sinful one at that. Genesis was the beginning of the end for the Goddess. (322)

These lines buzz the words of modern feminists like Simon de Beauvoir, Virginia Woolf, Julia Kristeva, and so on. *The Da Vinci Code* reads, "Jesus was the original feminist. He intended for the future of his church to be in hands of Mary Magdalene"(334). However, the subsequent history of the church has been a political battle to exclude the sacred feminine. According to Dan Brown, Constantine and his male successors successfully converted the world from matriarchal paganism to patriarchal Christianity.

Thus *The Da Vinci Code* exposes the conspiracy played by the early church to subjugate women. Its claim is that as a life bringer the women are more important

and sacred than the men. It condemns the suppression of women in the Christian world, and vigorously voices for their equal status in the society.

Harmony between the Sexes

Since the women were subordinated, the harmony between the two sexes was destroyed. The relationship between male and female was not that of equal status but like that of master and slave. The women were considered as an object to be used, and have constantly been exploited since then. But *The Da Vinci Code* claims that in the ancient time there was religious balance between male and female:

The ancients envisioned their world in two halves masculine and feminine. Their gods and goddesses worked to keep a balance of power. Yin and yang. When male and female were balanced, there was harmony in the world. When they were unbalanced there was chaos. (60)

Moreover, ascribing the cause of modern day violence to the destruction of harmony between the sexes Robert Langdon says:

The male ego had spent two millennium, running unchecked by its female counterpart. The Priory of Sion believed that it was this obliteration of the sacred feminine in modern life that had caused [...] life out of balance, an unstable situation marked by testosterone fuelled wars, a plethora of misogynistic societies and the growing disrespect for mother Earth. (174)

By denouncing the growing imbalance between the sexes in the modern world, *The Da Vinci Code* intends to restore ancient harmonious society so that peace and equality resonates all over the world.

The Divinity of Jesus Christ

Central but the most controversial issue in *The Da Vinci Code* is its rejection of Jesus Christ's Divinity. It claims that despite being an extremely influential figure, Jesus Christ was nonetheless a mortal man, having a wife and child. He married Mary Magdalene and had child by her. In the time of crucifixion, according to *The Da Vinci Code*, she was pregnant, and for her safety she fled to France, where the descendants of Jesus gave rise to the Merovingian line of Kings. After the declaration of Jesus' divinity, later descendants have always been in danger from the church, hidden from sight and well protected by highly organized century's old conspiracy. Explaining how the divinity of Jesus was constructed Brown writes:

During this fusion of religions, Constantine needed to strengthen the new Christian tradition, and held a famous ecumenical gathering known as the council of Nicaea. [...] At this gathering many aspects of Christianity were debated and voted upon –the date of Easter, the role of bishops, the administration of sacraments, and, of course, the divinity of Jesus Christ. (315)

The same things reverberate in the interaction between Leigh Teabing (Ian McKellen) and Sophie Neveu (Audrey Tautou) in the film. Thus, *The Da Vinci Code* claims Jesus Christ to be a human being. According to it, the Bible, which gives Jesus the status of divine being and firmly establishes the fact to the multitude of Christian followers, is merely a historical record constructed by the power (authorities of the fourth century AD). In the novel Brown mentions:

The Bible is a product of man. Not of God. The Bible did not fall magically from the clouds man created it as a historical record of

tumultuous times, and it has evolved through countless translations additions and revisions. (312-13)

Similarly, *The Da Vinci Code* claims that the early church conspired against the original followers of Jesus Christ to sustain and perpetuate its dominance. It says, "The early church stole Jesus from his original followers, hijacking his human message, shrouding it in an impenetrable cloak of divinity, and using it to expand its own power" (316).

However, regarding the issue of divinity of Jesus Christ the film adaptation takes a bit soft approach. While Dan Brown posits the theory that Jesus married Mary Magdalene and fathered her child, the film offers more skepticism to that theory. For instance, at one cinematic point Robert Langdon says, "History shows Jesus was an extraordinary man. Why couldn't Jesus have been divine and still have been a father? " (dialogue). These lines are not in the book. Similarly, the filmmakers try to back off from a hard line stance on the question of Jesus' divinity. Langdon says near the end of the film, "What matters is what you believe" (dialogue).

Postmodernist Ethos

Whether or not its claims are true, the novel seems to be the product of postmodern culture. Post modernity not only shows its incredulity to the meta narratives but also it is against establishment, and rejects metaphysical truths, among a number of its features. David Coachman finds three areas in which *The Da Vinci Code* reflects postmodern culture: "The relativizing of truth claims, the suspicion of institutions, and the promotion of interests that are seen as marginalized" (72).

Suspicion to large-scale truth claims (i.e. grand narratives) is one of the most important aspects of post modernity. This suspicion is not simply a doubt about the plausibility of such claims but also a suspicion about the motives of those making them. This suspicion comes out in *The Da Vinci Code* particularly in Dan Brown's attitude to history. It says, "[...] history is always written by the winners. When two cultures clash, the loser is obliterated, and the winner writes the history books which glorify their own cause and disparage the conquered foe" (343).

In this way he completely rejects the canonical Christian history, and calls it a fraudulent. But the novel claims that the alternative history it exposes is absolutely true. Here the question which history is true does not matter much as the relativization of the canonical history.

The next important feature that *The Da Vinci Code* reflects is the distrust towards institutions. *The Da Vinci Code* shows its distrust toward the church as an institution. Dan Brown accuses the church of having played the fowl conspiracy to suppress the dissident voices against its hegemony. In *The Da Vinci Code* he writes:

[...] the church has two thousand years of experience pressuring those who threaten to unveil its lies. Since the days of Constantine, the church has successfully hidden the truth about Mary Magdalene and Jesus [...]. The church may no longer employ crusaders to slaughter nonbelievers, but their influence is no less persuasive. No less insidious. (533-34)

In fact, one of the main reasons for the immense success of *The Da Vinci Code* is that it resonates with postmodern distrust of institutions.

Similarly, the disruption of hierarchy is another feature of postmodern culture. *The Da Vinci Code* rejects male superiority, and brings the long marginalized femininity to the center. It doubts the male worshipping Christian religion, and tries to restore goddess-worshipping tradition of ancient paganism. While in the Bible Mary Magdalene is portrayed as originally being a prostitute, *The Da Vinci Code* portrays her as a goddess. In the novel Dan Brown says, " The quest for the Holy Grail is literally the quest to kneel before the bones of Mary Magdalene. A journey to pray at the feet of the outcast one, the lost sacred feminine" (344). In short, *The Da Vinci Code* gives a divine status to the earlier marginalized femininity on the one hand, and relegates Jesus Christ, the established divine being, to the level of mortal human being on the other.

In conclusion, the film *The Da Vinci Code* is, despite some slight deviations, truly faithful to the novel regarding the thematic issues.

The Film Adaptation

The film *The Da Vinci Code* is an adaptation of Dan Brown's religio-detective novel *The Da Vinci Code*, which was released on May 19, 2006. Akiva Goldsman wrote the screenplay of the film, and Ron Howard, the Hollywood veteran behind such memorable films as *A Beautiful Mind* and *Cinderella Man*, directed the film. This adapted film of Dan Brown's religious thriller is one hundred forty-nine minutes long. The film exposes, like the novel, an alternative history of Christianity by decoding and deciphering various codes, esp. in and beyond Da Vinci's paintings.

Many critics opine that the film, *The Da Vinci Code*, fails as a commercial thriller because the scenes that make Dan Brown's novel so popular, such as

cryptography, secret societies, religious orders and alternative history, are difficult to translate to the big screen. Entire Scenes of *The Da Vinci Code* are composed of lectures on the history of Christianity and the life of Leonardo Da Vinci. The film keeps explaining, hypothesizing, and lecturing only to keep its audience hanging. In this regard Richard Corliss remarks:

They (scenes) are not, however, intrinsically visual or dramatic. To make a real movie out of *The Da Vinci Code* ... requires a rethinking of the book. Or at least thinking. Instead, director Ron Howard and screenwriter Akiva Goldsman pounded out a faithful synopsis and filmed it. The result is a work that is politically brave, for a mainstream movie, and artistically stodgy. (1)

However, like the novel, the film begins with the gruesome murder of Louvre Museum's curator, Jacques Saunière, and with the even more bizarre clues that the victim leaves in the museum's most famous wing. Robert Langdon (Tom Hanks), a visiting American academic, is falsely suspected. The quest for the murderer and the victim's desired thing written in codes involves deciphering clues in various Da Vinci masterpieces, flitting among famous monuments and churches in Paris, London and beyond and eventually uncovering a big religious secret.

The novel seems ready-made for movie adaptation in many respects. Its one-hundred- five very short chapters read like movie scenes, cutting back and forth between the questing fugitives, captain Beju Faze's search, the pale, ascetic murderer Silas and the backroom –conspiring high priests. What makes this thriller *The Da Vinci Code* so much more than other thrillers is its pairing of the suspenseful unfolding of action with gradual unfolding of a counter-history of Christianity, presented in large chunks of lecture.

While examining comparatively, the film seems to display more critical perspective. It introduces some skepticism to the part of Robert Landon played by Tom Hanks so as to soften the novel's bald claims about church cover-ups concerning Jesus Christ. In the words of Beal Timothy K:

Dan Brown's literary narrative of apocryphal religious revelation becomes Ron Howard's cinematic narrative of personal transformation and coming to faith, starring Tom Hanks as the Harvard religious symbolgist Robert Langdon, a scholarly skeptic who, in the end, remembers how to pray. (Timothy)

Robert Langdon in the film is a man who knows what other believe about Jesus, Mary Magdalene and the Grail, but who is personally dubious. In the film as in the novel, the seminar over tea with Teabing (Ian Makellen) is a key scene.



Figure 1: The three main characters at tea in Teabing's chateau villete

But in the film, it is used less to reveal the truth of Brown's counter-Gospel and more to highlight Langdon's skepticism.

As Teabing lectures Neveu on the multiple Gospels, the pagan Constantine's role in inventing Jesus divinity, the marriage of Jesus and Mary Magdalene, and

their continuing bloodline, the camera repeatedly cuts to Langdon, slouching back in his chair, furrowing his eyebrows incredulously. As Teabing's excitement grows, so does Langdon's doubt. Throughout the scene multiple camera angles and quick cuts are used adding to the sense of multiple perspectives and dissonance.



Figure 2 : Teabing claiming the divinity of Jesus Christ's as constructed



Figure 3: Robert Langdon showing skepticism towards Teabing's claim of the construction of Jesus Christ's divinity by Constantine

However, by the end of the film Langdon has found faith, certainly a faith in Sophie Neveu. In the climactic moment Langdon says to Sophie, "You are the Grail" (dialogue). If in the novel the truth of her identity is a religious revelation, in the film it is the profession of newfound faith. The final scene in the film, as in the novel, finds Langdon



Figure 4: Robert Langdon kissing in the forehead of Sophie Neveu

returning to the Louvre and dropping to his knees at the pyramid, having finally cracked the last riddle and realized that Mary Magdalene is entombed beneath it. In the novel, this is the denouement when the last piece of the mystery is solved and the revelation is complete. In the film when he leans forward and closes his teary eyes as if in a prayer is the climactic moment of redemption and grace. Along his way to this moment of prayer, Langdon finds in religious experience a new viability for the divinity of Christ, unequivocally demised in the novel as the conspiracy of Constantine.

Similarly, Jeffrey Ressler mentions Ron Howard as saying, "Because the story is so well known, the last little bit of mystery I have to offer is how I

interpreted it " (Ressner). These words echo the saying of the film critic, Brian McFarlane, that a film adaptation is only an interpretation of the original source work. Although the story line of the film is the same as that of the novel, which follows an uncovering of an alleged conspiracy staged in Christian history, Howard delivers something the novel does not. That is, the re-creations of supposed historical events central to the ancient conspiracy. Howard says, "We try to transport the audience back in time so they can understand its context" (Ressner).

The Film as an Art Form

When a work of art in linguistic mode of fiction is transformed into the visual mode of cinema, both of them become autonomous works of art. Unlike fiction, for instance, the film has the visual and aural elements that form the basic means of communication in it. The artistic use of the visual and aural qualities and properties of the film medium determines the effectiveness of a motion picture. If a fiction is designed to be read, a film is made to be seen and heard, to appeal our visual and aural senses. So while analyzing a film, we should examine the filmmaker's use of camera angles and camera movement, focus, framing, lighting, setting, editing, point of view, special effects, dialogue, and music.

As explained in the earlier chapter, *The Da Vinci Code* as a film deals with the same themes as the novel. Not only that, its structure, narrative pattern, and even the dialogue are almost similar to that of the novel. That is why many film critics criticize the film for being a snooze largely because the screenwriters tried to cram as much of Brown's book as possible onto the screen.

Nevertheless, the film is distinct art form, having its unique properties. So, in the course of film adaptation of the novel a number of elements are adapted so as to

make them amiable to the film medium. In this chapter, we will be focusing on how the two different artistic genres treat the same materials in different ways, especially by analyzing the film adaptation of the novel *The Da Vinci Code*.

Dan Brown's novel *The Da Vinci Code* has a brilliant narrative quality. It is an example of supreme quest narrative. The attractive and erudite characters interacting with each other over the scholarly issues make the novel more interesting. Their interaction explores the things such as secret societies and various codes, thereby unfolding an alternative Christian history. Similarly, the narrative includes the descriptions of a number of glamorous sites. The film adaptation of the novel also captures all these elements, but in visual mode.

The film opens in Paris, and is seen from a popular American tourist point of view. The story involves the glamorous sites such as the Ritz Hotel, the Eiffel tower, the Louvre museum, and so forth, which make the film more interesting. In fact, the first half of the film includes a number of scenes in and near Paris. As the story progresses we are introduced to a number of attractive and fascinating locations and historical buildings in Paris, in London and at Roslyn in Scotland.

Like the plot of the novel, the plot of the film is in the pattern of quest narrative. It is full of numerous escapes and close shaves, high-speed car chases and cross-channel light plane flights, abundant movement and change of scenes, several murders, misunderstandings and betrayals, high level intrigue, the growth of mutual admiration and possible love between two principals. The plot is set up at first as a series of parallel alternating scenes, moving from focalization on Robert Langdon (Tom Hanks) and Sophie Neveu (Audrey Tautou) to the various groups of rival baddies. This technique provides for rapid alternation of different setting and points

of view, foregrounding the high drama of different parties seeking different ends at the same time.

Similarly, like the novel, the film deals with the hidden group of people knowing, guarding, and passing on the truth despite all difficulties and opposition over two thousand years. The main characters throughout the film decode a number of codes and symbols on the way of their being chased, thereby unfolding an alternative Christian history. The encryption and decryption is *raison d'être* of the film, too. However, our purpose here is not to judge how faithful the film is to the novel, but to examine the cinematic qualities that make the film *The Da Vinci Code* unique from its source novel.

The Setting and Exposition

The setting of both the novel and the film is initially in Paris at Louvre Museum, where a renowned curator, Jacques Saunière, is murdered. But he left behind a set of riddles and clues and he selected two people - his granddaughter Sophie Neveu and Harvard professor of symbology Robert Langdon - to unravel them. As the French police suspect Langdon to be the convict, the chase begins. Then, the protagonists run from Paris through London to Scotland, changing the places, to find out the murderer and the secrets Jacques Saunière implied. Though the setting of the novel and the film is almost similar, the ways they establish it widely differ.

The novel being a linguistic and a written work of art, a novelist establishes it through written words and the reader imaginatively constructs it in his/her mind. But the film, being a visual art, presents it directly through a series of visual images.

And through the perception of visual images we understand the film medium. The novel *The Da Vinci Code*, for instance, begins with the following passage:

Louvre Museum, Paris

10:46 P.M.

Renowned curator Jacques Saunière staggered through the vaulted archway of the Museum's Grand Gallery. He lunged for the nearest painting he could see, a Caravaggio. Grabbing the gilded frame, the seventy-six-year-old heaved the masterpiece toward himself until it tore from the wall and Saunière collapsed backward in a heap beneath the canvas. (17)

The passages not only inform us about the time and the place of the incident, but also establish the mood of the entire novel. The nighttime setting and the hurried and hopeless moves of Saunière give us the hint of the impending danger to him. Moreover, the passage also implies the thrilling and breathless atmosphere of the entire novel.

Similarly, the opening shots of the film make wonderful use of figures in the wall paintings that seem to track Saunière as he runs past them in a vain attempt to save his life. The sounds of his movements and his terrified rush indicate the upcoming similar movements and rush in the film. It means the opening shots also establish the mood and the tempo of the entire movie. The following shot shows Jacques Saunière's hopeless rush in order to save his life in the beginning of the film:



Figure 5: Jacques Saunière, running through the alley of the museum with the wall paintings to save his life

Likewise, in the novel the characters, places, and the events are exposed mostly through descriptive passages. But they are exposed directly through images and action in the film. Sometimes just a shot is enough to replace a page or more descriptive passages of the novel. Silas, for instance, is exposed by the following description in the novel: "He was broad and tall with ghost pale skin and thinning white hair. His irises were pink with dark red pupils. The albino drew a pistol from his coat and aimed the barrel through the bars, directly at the curator" (17).

In the film, however, he is directly exposed in person so that such description is not necessary. The following shot in which he is exposed, explains more than the passage, including his costumes, facial expression, and his motive:



Figure 6: Silas pointing gun at Jacques Saunière

The Points of View

In the novel, the point of view is the way the story is told, and it operates through language. The point of view in the fiction controls and dictates the form and shape of the work and determines its emphasis, tone, strengths and limitations.

There are five types of points of view in the novel, namely the first person point of view, the third person omniscient point of view, third person limited point of view, dramatic or objective point of view, and the stream of consciousness. Among them the dramatic point of view is the only novelistic point of view that can be directly translated into cinema. So, the filmmakers choose to ignore the novel's points of view and the prose passages that stress thought or reflection, and simply duplicate the most dramatic scenes. The cinematic point of view focus not only on what we are seeing but also on how it is being shown and why it is being shown that way. Cinematic point of view depends on the different ways the movie camera sees the actions. Unlike in the novel, there is no consistent viewpoint in the film. There are four points of view in the motion pictures – objective, subjective, indirect-

subjective, and directors' interpretive - which can be employed in a single film according to the need. The novel *The Da Vinci Code* is written in an omniscient third person point of view, which remains consistent all over the novel. But the film incorporates all the cinematic points of view.

The objective point of view shows the actions as if they were taking place at a distance, and the audiences are not asked to participate. It employs a static camera as much as possible, and gives the sense of window viewing of the action. It concentrates on the actors and the action without drawing attention to the camera. In short, the objective viewpoint suggests an emotional distance between camera and subject. The following figure shows the objective viewpoint of the camera:



Figure 7: Leigh Teabing greeting Robert Landon and Sophie Neveu

The subjective point of view, on the other hand, gives us the visual viewpoint and the emotional intensity felt by a character participating in the action. This type of point of view forces us to become the characters and experience their emotions. The following subjective shot gives us, and Sophie Neveu's view towards Leigh Teabing:



Figure 8: Sophie viewing at Teabing

Similarly, the indirect subjective point of view does not provide a participant's point of view, but it does bring us close to the action so that we feel intimately involved and our visual experience is intense. A close up that conveys the emotional reaction of a character is an example of indirect subjective point of view. The following indirect subjective shot, for instance, brings us close to the action and involves us in it as we react emotionally toward Teabing:



Figure 9: Leigh Teabing in excitement in his talking with Robert Langdon and Sophie Neveu

Lastly, the director's interpretive point of view indicates the techniques that the director employs so as to manipulate the audience's viewpoint. A director does this by photographing a scene from special angles or with special lenses, or in slow or fast motion. By doing this, the director imposes on the image a certain tone, emotional attitude, or style. In this type of point of view, the audiences are forced to react in a certain way to what they see. In the following shot the director imposes his view of Silas on us:



Figure 10: Silas torturing himself

To conclude, the novelistic point of view and the cinematic point of view widely differ in their treatment of events and actions. Even if they deal with the same issues, they leave quite different impressions on the readers or viewers.

Music

Music plays an important role in a film in that it creates and directs the emotions and the psychic states of the audience. It amplifies the emotional content of the scene. But music remains completely absent in a novel. Music in film is generally categorized into two groups: motivated and non-motivated. The motivated use of music gives the audience a sense of naturalness for such music seems to be a part of the scene itself. Non-motivated music, however, is imposed upon the scene from outside.

Music of the film *The Da Vinci Code* was composed by Hans Zimmer. The music in the film gives the audience the impression of it being a thriller. It also indicates the mood of the characters, and the development of the story. Actually, music tells us the things that the words or images cannot provide. Regarding the question how he composed the music for *The Da Vinci Code* Hans Zimmer said:

What I came away with from reading the book was the idea of Divine Feminine. The two tasks I set for myself were how do you write anything in inverted commas, action that does not use masculine chords in the music, and try to develop a language for it as well, which was about the strength of women. (Qtd. in Conniff, 2)

To give some specific scenes from the film in which music affects the psychic states of the audience, the scenes of the chase come ahead of all. The music in such scenes intensifies the emotions of the viewers. For instance, when Langdon (Tom Hanks) and Sophie Neveu (Audrey Tautou) escape from the Louvre Museum followed by the French police, the siren of police vans and fast musical tone heighten the emotions of the audience. Sometimes music takes us back to the earlier experiences

of the characters, such as Sophie Neveu and Silas. Music throughout the film thus reinforces the mood and the tempo of the events and the characters, thereby producing the desired effects on the audiences.

Visual Effects

The visual images make the film a unique medium. Even though the nature and quality of the story, editing, musical score, sound effects, dialogue and acting play an important role to enhance a film's power, these elements can not save a film whose images are mediocre or poorly edited. Similarly, another essential feature of the film medium is continuous motion, a flowing and ever changing images and sounds.

The film *The Da Vinci Code* manages to keep a continuous flow of starkly dramatic and powerful images before the viewers, using very tight and controlled cinematic composition. Howard places most of the film's scenes in various places across Paris, London and Scotland. There are very few long shots in the film. To create the sense of rapid movement and rush, Howard uses very short shots, and changes the scenes rapidly. *The Da Vinci Code* is full of movements and physical actions. There are several murders, the chases and escapes. The characters deliver most of the dialogues in the film in hurried moments, and in thrilling atmosphere.

Another powerful visual element that adds to the dramatic effect of *The Da Vinci Code* is its lighting. The majority of scenes take place at night. Every shadow, every shaft of light, most of the backgrounds and many close ups are bathed in blue light. The first ten minutes of the film prevails the ubiquitous blue.

The most important visual element of *The Da Vinci Code* is its historical flashbacks. Ron Howard recreates the supposed historical events central to the

ancient conspiracy so as to transport the audience back in time so that they can understand their context. Howard, for instance, speeds us off to crowded, computer-generated vision of



Figure 11: The authorities torturing the followers of the ancient pagan religion ancient Rome and Holy land. Similarly, there are the desaturated -color flashbacks to traumatic moments in the character's history, such as little Robert falling down in a well as a child, the car crash that kills Sophie's parents, and the back story of Silas.



Figure 12: The car accident that killed Sophie's parents



Figure 13: Robert Langdon falling in the well as a child

Thus the novel *The Da Vinci Code* and its Film adaptation become autonomous works of art, possessing the artistic qualities specific to their respective medium. Although the film *The Da Vinci Code* is faithful to the novel in respect to the story, themes, and narrative style, it is still distinct in its visual, aural and musical qualities, in its use of different types of viewpoints, and in the actions instead of narration and description.

They are distinct not only in their medium of presentation but the film adaptation slightly deviates from its source novel in its treatment of subject matter itself. The novel from the very beginning to the end manifests its orthodox opposition to the mainstream Christian history, especially to the divinity of Jesus Christ. In the very beginning of the novel Dan Brown claims the factuality of the novel. Later in the novel the protagonist Robert Langdon and the prominent historian Leigh Teabing try to justify this claim by bringing the evidences from various historical documents. But the film takes more critical and liberal approach. The protagonist of the film Robert Langdon is not so orthodox as he is in the novel.

He is of the view that Jesus Christ can be a father and a divine being at the same time. He rejects, unlike in the novel, the fact that Constantine the Great constructed the divinity of Jesus Christ, and opines that he simply had sanctioned the then widely held idea. Similarly, he believes in faith and once says in the film, "What matters is what you believe" (dialogue). However, the film adaptation shares almost all other aspects of the novel *The Da Vinci Code*.

IV. Conclusion

This research studies the relationship between the novel and its film adaptation with special reference to Dan Brown's novel *The Da Vinci Code* and its film adaptation directed by Ron Howard. The researcher comes up with the conclusion that it is rather difficult to comprehend a film completely without observing the novelistic elements embedded in it. But, despite sharing a number of elements, the novel and film are two distinct and autonomous works of art, having their inherently unique properties.

The research makes it clear that the novelistic tradition of the late 19th century helped a lot to establish film as an art form. Before the introduction of narrative in the film, it was only a sight seeing tour; it was not considered as a work of art at all. It was D.W. Griffith who first borrowed the techniques of novel and introduced them into films.

Thus this research, on the one hand, exposes the close affinity that the film and the novel have. On the other hand, it succinctly observes those properties that make them unique artistic media. Both the art forms have in common a number of elements, such as story, characters, setting, plot, imaginative quality and so on. But these elements are presented necessarily in a different mode. That is, novel emerged from the traditions of written language and essentially is a literary genre. But the film emerged from the tradition of visual arts such as painting and photography. A reader must imaginatively construct a fictional world out of the written words while reading novel. However, in a film the viewers only perceive the already created fictional world through the visual images and sound. Thus, the film and the novel are autonomous works of art though they share many things.

This study examines comparatively Dan Brown's novel *The Da Vinci Code* and its film adaptation. It analyzes them thematically and finds the film version as showing a more critical attitude towards the issue of Jesus Christ's divinity. But the other themes are presented as rigorously as in the novel. Similarly, the film does not claim its descriptions of art and architecture, and documents as being actual. But in the beginning of the novel Dan Brown explicitly claims, "All descriptions of artwork, architecture, documents and secret rituals in this novel are accurate" (Brown). The exposition of an alternative Christian history and the suspicion towards the canonical Christian history is the thrust of both the novel and the film. So, the researcher finds *The Da Vinci Code* to be the product of present day postmodern culture.

Similarly, this research observes the elements that are transferred to the film as they are in the novel and those that are adapted so as to make them fit to the film medium. It finds that in the adaptation of the novel *The Da Vinci Code* all the characters, themes, plot, narrative technique and setting are transferred as they are in the novel. But, since the novel and the film are inherently different works of art, they are transformed from the linguistic mode of novel to the visual mode of film.

As the film is more dramatic work of art it avoids the descriptive passages of the novel. It presents rather than describes. With the help of visual images it can tell us much more than the novel can. That is how it becomes possible to transform more than five hundred pages novel *The Da Vinci Code* into only one hundred and forty-nine minutes long film. Since the visual images and the actions instead of description and narration are dominant in the film, the narrative unfolds through images and actions. While in the novel the story is told from a particular points of view and it is consistent all over the novel, a film contains various points of view

within a single film or even in a single scene. Cinematic points of view are quite different from novelistic points of view in that the cinematic viewpoints are imposed on the images themselves with the help of camera lenses. The research also includes some figures from the film *The Da Vinci Code* so as to support the basic argument.

Thus, this research observes the distinctive artistic features of novel and film, and at the same time it examines the common features they share with reference to the novel *The Da Vinci Code* and its film adaptation bearing the same name. The researcher comes up with the conclusion that the film adaptation of the novel *The Da Vinci Code* is truly faithful to the novel in respect to themes, plot, narrative style, setting, characters and even to dialogue. But it is inherently different work of art, having dramatic, visual and aural qualities that the novel lacks.

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