



## From Text Dialogue to Horizon Fusion: On the Juxtaposed Reading of Film and Its Source Novel

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**Supported by** the Scientific Research Fund of Zhejiang Provincial Education Department(Y202044026). A Research Achievement of “312 Talents Training Project” of Zhejiang Open University.

Received 22 April 2022; accepted 1 June 2022

Published online 26 June 2022

### Abstract

Gadamer’s hermeneutic theory of the fusion of horizons, along with his notion of text, opens the way to a juxtaposed reading of film and its source novel. Novel and its film adaptation are two intersecting but truly independent texts in which dialogues of different horizon subjects are interwoven. The juxtaposed reading goes through the process from respective reading to fusion reading, from deep dialogue to fusion of horizons. With its assistance we explore the close connection between the two texts referring to the source story, turn the implicit expression of human exploration of the relationship between the past and the present into an explicit dialogue, and further reveal the aesthetic taste and social meaning of the constructive texts. It can be seen that the constructive significance from the two texts is not fixed and constrained, but forever in the infinite possibilities of future-oriented generation. The fusion of horizon produces a new horizon that goes beyond the standpoints of the writer and the adapter, beyond the previous biases of the interpreter, reaching a higher and newer level. The juxtaposed reading of film and its source novel is essentially a dynamic process involving the continuous fusion of multiple subject horizons to the continuous generation of new horizons, and its ultimate goal is to reflect the truth, goodness and beauty of the world to the greatest extent.

**Key words:** The fusion of horizons; Deep dialogue; Film adaptation; Novel

Zhao, F. (2022). From Text Dialogue to Horizon Fusion: On the Juxtaposed Reading of Film and Its Source Novel. *Studies in Literature and Language*, 24(3), 30-38. Available from: <http://www.cscanada.net/index.php/sll/article/view/12550> DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.3968/12550>

Gadamer expands the definition of text (the object of hermeneutics) to all socio-cultural phenomena that have existed in history, are still influential today, and thus attract our attention. All humanities research activities can essentially be regarded as an activity of understanding texts, and can be applied concretely to hermeneutics as a basic methodology. From this perspective, novel is a literary text, and its filmic adaptation is a resulting text and the relationship of the two texts is parallel but essentially independent. If the two texts are further interpreted juxtaposed under Gadamer’s notion of the fusion of horizons, we have a chance to explore their close connection with the source text (source story), and turn the implicit expression of comparing the present and the past into an explicit dialogue across time and space, then the tension buried in the two texts will be further highlighted, and the aesthetic taste and social meaning will be further revealed. Through in-depth dialogue, the author’s horizon, adapter’s horizon, reader/audience’s horizon, historical horizon, problem horizon, and other horizon subjects continue to collide, superimpose, extend, expand, analyze and compare, which presents the process of understanding from textual deconstruction to meaning reconstruction, and eventually a new fusion of horizons is constructed. The fusion of horizons produces new understandings, and new understandings are continuously evolving, through which human beings’ thoughts on the past and the search for the future can be deeply considered, and the richness, profundity and significance of life can be revealed, manifested and existed.

## 1. GUIDING THEORY AND METHOD OF JUXTAPOSED READING OF FILM AND ITS SOURCE NOVEL

### 1.1 The Fusion of Horizons: A New Concept Guiding Juxtaposed Reading

The fusion of horizons is one of the four key fundamental concepts in Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics, following previous biases, effective- history, and deep dialogue.

Horizon is the area of seeing, which encompasses everything that can be seen from a certain point of view (Gadamer, 1990). According to Gadamer's hermeneutics, observing Dasein (the thing itself) is observing the relationship of it to others. Horizon is the collection of relationships around Dasein. The horizon of the subject is limited at a given moment. But on the other hand, horizon is open and unlimited. Because the subject's cognitive ability can be continuously improved, the subject's foothold and perspective of observing things can also be constantly moving, which leads to the scope and boundary of the subject's horizon being constantly in motion. The horizon is limited because the things perceived by the subject at the moment are limited, and the horizon is infinite because there are actually infinite unperceived things in the horizon.

An interpreter has two distinct horizons—one in which he lives and one in which he places himself in the historical horizon of the time. The interpreter places himself in a historical situation and acquires an understanding of the text, such a self-insertion is neither the transfer of one personality into another personality nor the subjecting of another to our own standards, but always implies an elevation to a higher understanding which overcomes not only our own individuality, but also the individuality of that other (Gadamer, 1990). The task of the interpreter is to expand their horizon so that it merges with other horizons, which is called the fusion of horizons (Gadamer, 1990).

The fusion of horizons is not only diachronic, but also synchronic, in which history and present, object and subject, self and other constitute an infinite unified whole (Gadamer, 1990). Understanding is not a one-time act of the subject, but an infinite game process between dasein and our pre-judgments and/or previous biases. Every understanding is a process of meaning generation, always in the way of effective - history. Similarly, Mikhail Bakhtin's Chronotope theory states that the world should be observed as a synchronic world, and only in the case of synchronicity can the true meaning of past, present and future be revealed (Bakhtin, 1998). Gadamer and Bakhtin both come to a point that synchronicity is of great importance. Gadamer states the time gap between us and history is not only not an obstacle that must be overcome in understanding and interpretation, but rather a condition

for constructive understanding and interpretation.

No creation can transcend the historical divide, and the interpretation of any text is a dialogue between two eras and two thoughts. Historicity is the basic fact of human existence. Both texts are historical beings, since time and space interval is objectively existing. Both understanding and text are intrinsically embedded in history, any understanding is carried out within history, and any interpreter is in their own way of survival in history. From this point of view, true understanding is not to overcome this historicity, but to correctly comment on and adapt to it. The activity of hermeneutics is to project a historical perspective that is different from the current horizon. Historical consciousness is aware of his own otherness and, therefore, distinguishes the traditional horizon from its own (Gadamer, 1990). It is because through the projection of historical horizons, the interpreter forms his own broad and profound understanding and finally seeks to reach an understanding of the dimension of truth. A text always carries a historical horizon of the creator and a current horizon of the interpreter, and there are bound to be various gaps between them. The understanding of the text is a process of reconstruction, which includes both the concept of past history and our understanding of it.

Gadamer further states that the encounter of past and present produces tension and the task of hermeneutics is not to conceal this tension with a simple assimilation, but to consciously expose it (Gadamer, 1990). This exposure reveals the creativity of the fusion of various horizons. The significance of the text is revealed in the course of this creative moment. When the "tension" between the author's horizon, the film horizon, the historical horizon, and the problem horizon are constantly discovered, collided, mutually learned, compared, and extended by the two texts in a synchronic situation, we will eventually merge into a profound understanding.

### 1.2 Deep Dialogue: The Basic Method of Juxtaposed Reading

Since the fusion of horizons is the key to a profound understanding, how is the fusion of horizons concretely realized in the practice of specific juxtaposed reading of film and its source novel? Gadamer's answer is question-and-answer logic, i.e., a deep dialogue between subjects of different horizons.

Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics notion of text clarify the relationship between film and its source novel as intersecting but essentially independent texts, and the comparison of the two which belong to two respective horizons will objectively exist theoretically. Desmond and Hawkes put forward that the contrast between literature and its film adaptation reveals different forms of interpretation of the same story (Desmond & Hawkes, 2005). Robert Stam states film adaptation is simultaneously an adaptation and an original screenplay (Stam, 2005). All confirms that novel and its film

adaptations have their own horizons. In order to overcome this horizon gap, it is necessary to establish an equal and harmonious dialogue without mutual exclusion. An equal and harmonious dialogue relationship is a prerequisite for the convergence of horizons, for if there is not an equal and harmonious dialogue relationship, one party cannot smoothly enter the position and horizon of the other side, not to mention understand horizon of the other side and get a new truth. An equal and harmonious dialogue does not mean to be consistent with the position of others. Gadamer explains when we discover someone else's position and horizon, his point of view can be understood by us, but we do not necessarily agree with his opinion (Gadamer, 1990). Therefore, the process of understanding is a process of dialectical dialogue between the interpreter and the text. Only through dialogue-based interpretations time and time again can one come infinitely closer to completing the understanding of a masterpiece and reaching the new horizon necessarily.

Deep dialogue essentially means a dialogue happens in an open, transcendental, holographic, and dynamic process of repeated and continuous elevation. Mikhail Bakhtin believes that the essence of art is dialogue. Julia Kristeva points out, in her interpretation of Bakhtin's "dialogism", any text is composed of inlays of quotations, and any text is an absorption and adaptation of another text (Kristeva, 1986). Robert Stam proposes Bakhtin's concept of "dialogism", Kristeva's "intertextuality" and Gerard Genette's "transtextuality" for the theory and analysis of film adaptation, and concludes adaptations are caught up in the ongoing whirl of intertextual reference and transformation, of texts generating other texts in an endless process of recycling, transformation, and transmutation, with no clear point of origin (Stam, 2005). Overall, dialogue in a broad sense has existed in the film and its source novel. Based on the above, we can concretize the deep dialogue between the two texts with the following practical strategies. First, have a deep dialogue with the writer's horizon, to grasp the writer's original intention to the greatest extent. Second, have a deep dialogue with the traditional horizon and re-examine the historical authenticity in an all-round way. Third, dialogue with the film adapter's horizon, creatively discovering the problems of his times. Finally, dialogue with the audience's horizon, because the historical and cultural audience targeted by the writer and the adapter is very different.

Above all, the activity of understanding is always the fusion process of horizons that embedded in themselves. Moreover, the dialogue between the two texts (the film and its source novel) should bear historical consciousness in mind. Novel horizon encompasses everything that can be seen from the writer's point of view, and is the collection of relationships around the writer. The film horizon, however, encompasses everything that can be

seen from the adapter's point of view, which is based on the novel horizon and the problems of the times in which it is located, and constantly contacts, extends, collides, compares and finally integrates with the writer's point of view, the source story, the source novel, the reader's and/or audience's point of view, etc., always in a way of forming a new understanding. Therefore, a film adaptation unleashes their tension (creativity) by reinterpreting the source novel.

The task of historical understanding involves finding a special historical world, reaching an understanding of the dimension of truth (Zhang, 2018). In order to reach the understanding of the dimension of truth, the juxtaposed reading needs to constantly excavate cultural phenomena in depth and breadth. To this end, the historical horizon, as one of the subjects of dialogue, should include a historical examination of the historical situation, social trend, social ethics, literary tendencies and other critical elements at the time of creation of literary works, as well as a historical examination of the current historical situation, social trend, social ethics, literary tendencies and other critical elements of the adapter, along with a historical examination of the archetype of the community of interpretation. At the same time, the examination of the author's horizon should include not only the plot, characters, views and themes of the story, but also the author's characteristics, aesthetic attitude and writing style, as well as the cultural background and historical background of the archetype, etc., all of which must be truly clear with the help of in-depth dialogue.

## 2. JUXTAPOSED READING OF THE NOVEL *THE FRENCH LIEUTENANT'S WOMAN* AND ITS FILM ADAPTATION

The above analysis shows that the fusion of horizons combines what distinguishes film and its source novel from each other. It can be used as a theoretical idea to effectively guide the juxtaposed reading of film and its source novel. The following takes the novel *The French Lieutenant's Woman* and its filmic adaptation as an example to illustrate.

The 1969 novel *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, by British writer John Fowles (1926-2005), widely praised for the experimental narrative device and its quality for being meta-fiction, was awarded with W.H. Smith Literary Award in 1970, and has been hailed as a precursor to the neo-Victorian novels. Filming the novel became an impossible project until 1981 the British playwright Harold Pinter (1930-2008) tackled it. "The movie's a challenge to our intelligence, takes delight in playing with our expectations, and has one other considerable achievement as well: It entertains admirers of Fowles's novel, but does not reveal the book's secrets (Ebert, 1981)."

The same year, it was nominated for the Academy Award for Best Writing (Adapted Screenplay). The film and its source novel both construct a dual space of two eras (the Victorian society in the nineteenth century and the current Britain in the twentieth century); both essentially attempt to reflect the relationship between life and art, artists and their creations, and conventional roles and individuals' struggle for selfhood.

In the perspective of Gadamer's the fusion of horizons, the two texts present three distinct horizons, namely, the novel horizon (mainly referring to the horizon presented by John Fowles and his novel *The French Lieutenant's Woman*), the film horizon (mainly referring to Harold Pinter and his adaptation of the film *The French Lieutenant's Woman*) and the historical horizon (historical context of the Victorian Age in the 19th century in Britain). The dialogue emerges in the extension, collision and mutual learning between the above three horizon subjects, which is embodied specifically in the following details.

## 2.1 The Dialogue Between the Novel Horizon and the Historical Horizon

The novel *The French Lieutenant's Woman* explores this traditionally conventional cultural phenomenon through consciously parody and recreation of a typical Victorian romance. The typical characters, situations, dialogue, the choice of opening quotations, which are drawn from the poetry of Tennyson (particularly *In Memoriam* and *Maud*) and Matthew Arnold (particularly *To Marguerite*) as well as historical documents, all bring readers to the scene of nineteenth century Britain, leaving us immersed in a tragic situation shadowing of Thomas Hardy's fictions - a dark, mysterious protagonist Sarah standing on the shore of Lyme Regis and an aristocratic young amateur paleontologist Charles wanting to rescue her from plight after knowing her abandoned by the French lieutenant while finding her mystery and sadness irresistible and falling in love with her out of sympathy but finally lost in illusions. However, another character "I", an intruder from 1960s, look back the typical Victorian romance with a somewhat ironical eye. "I" provide a lot of historical information about the Victorian Golden Age (1850-1875) with silhouettes of the lives of upper-class figures and working people, and even the number of prostitutes in London. Quoted the 1867 *Children's Employment Commission Report* as the opening, Chapter 35 opens with a contrasting technique.

"What are we faced with in the nineteenth century? An age where woman was sacred; and where you could buy a thirteen-year-old girl for a few pounds - a few shillings, if you wanted her for only an hour or two. Where more churches were built than in the whole previous history of the country; and where one in sixty houses in London was a brothel (the modern ratio would be nearer one in six thousand). Where the sanctity of marriage (and chastity

before marriage) was proclaimed from every pulpit, in every newspaper editorial and public utterance; and where never-or hardly ever-have so many great public figures, from the future king down, led scandalous private lives. Where the penal system was progressively humanized; and flagellation so rife that a Frenchman set out quite seriously to prove that the Marquis de Sade must have had English ancestry. Where the female body had never been so hidden from view; and where every sculptor was judged by his ability to carve naked women. Where there is not a single novel, play or poem of literary distinction that ever goes beyond the sensuality of a kiss, where Dr Bowdler (the date of whose death, 1825, reminds us that the Victorian ethos was in being long before the strict threshold of the age) was widely considered a public benefactor; and where the output of pornography has never been exceeded. Where the excretory functions were never referred to; and where the sanitation remained - the flushing lavatory came late in the age and remained a luxury well up to 1900 - so primitive that there can have been few houses, and few streets, where one was not constantly reminded of them. Where it was universally maintained that women do not have orgasms; and yet every prostitute was taught to simulate them. Where there was an enormous progress and liberation in every other field of human activity; and nothing but tyranny in the most personal and fundamental."

What was the Victorian society like in history? In 1867 (the year in which most of the novel is set), the second "Reform Act" was introduced, Nobel invented gunpowder, the first volume of Marx's *Capital* was published, the Dominion of Canada was established, the Paris World's Fair introduced Japanese art to Europe, and Darwin's *Origin of Species* was published for eight years. England became a typical capitalist country, the power of the old aristocracy declined and women's rights were also becoming a political issue; while middle-class values and Puritan sexuality were advocated, modeled on the female figures of Christianity and Queen Victoria, and thus the elegant, chaste women and family angels, the "Silver Fork School" were promoted, and the conservative and scholastic style artworks were touted. In the literary genre, the trend of critical realism in nineteenth century England flourished, with representatives of William M Thackeray, Thomas Dickens, Jane Austen and the Brontë Sisters etc., who not only gave a satirical portrayal of the bourgeoisie and all the ruling classes, but also showed profound sympathy for the common people. But the critical realists did not find a way to eradicate social evils and they did not realize the necessity of changing the bourgeois society (Liu, 1993). Thus, the nineteenth century writers tended to end fictions conservatively and eclectically.

"I" acting as an observer and critic, constantly measured the hypocrisy of Victorian moral traditions. "I" think every Victorian had two minds, which highlights in

chapter 49. “This - the fact that every Victorian had two minds-is the one piece of equipment we must always take with us on our travels back to the nineteenth century. It is a schizophrenia seen at its clearest, its most notorious, in the poets I have quoted from so often - in Tennyson, Clough, Arnold, Hardy; but scarcely less clearly in the extraordinary political veering’s from Right to Left and back again of men like the younger Mill and Gladstone; in the ubiquitous neuroses and psychosomatic illnesses of intellectuals otherwise as different as Charles Kingsley and Darwin; in the execration at first poured on the Pre-Raphaelites, who tried-or seemed to be trying - to be one-minded about both art and life; in the endless tug-of-war between Liberty and Restraint, Excess and Moderation, Propriety and Conviction, between the principled man’s cry for Universal Education and his terror of Universal Suffrage; transparent also in the mania for editing and revising, so that if we want to know the real Mill or the real Hardy we can learn far more from the deletions and alterations of their autobiographies than from the published versions ... more from correspondence that somehow escaped burning, from private diaries, from the petty detritus of the concealment operation...”

In *Notes on an Unfinished Novel* (1969), Fowles stated by the 1860s, the great iron structures of the Victorians’ philosophies, religions, and social stratifications were already beginning to look dangerously corroded to the more perspicacious. Sarah in Fowles’s writing is even more different from her Victorian counterparts and even beyond the image of “restrained” rebels such as Jane Eyre, Jude, and Madame Bovary. Rather, it is based on modern time and space, making Sarah the archetype of a “degenerate” woman, who is already aware of herself as an individual not defined by conventional roles: a “prostitute” and “tragedy” who dares to fight against the convention, a mysterious woman who “manipulates” men’s feelings from beginning to end in the role of a mentor. Even Charles the Darwin’s advocate, Charles the gentleman, Charles the lover could not understand the mystery of Sarah the Sphinx; the end result of the puzzle was that the savior became the rescued. The vision of the novel presents the true reality obscured by the historical space from a subversive point of view: marriage and sexual confrontation, the hypocrisy of the wealthy and religious Mrs. Poultney and the purity and subversion of the French lieutenant’s woman. What’s more, the four-fold different endings make readers ponder philosophical questions like chance and necessity, choice and fate.

In addition, the novel horizon constructs the relationship between the “observer” and “the observed” in the narrative. The historical horizon is the “the observed”, and the “observer” is the narrator “I” who “lived in the age of Alain Robbe-Grillet and Roland Barth”. From the beginning, “I” held a telescope to observe the person being seen on the setting. Then, “I” became the role of Mephistopheles and followed Charles to solve

the “mystery”. “I” condescendingly explained history, commented on characters, and sometimes sneered at characters. “I” set Charles free, and “I” was also curious about “where did Sarah come from?”; “I” was a bearded middle-aged man who sat in the same carriage as Charles to see how he ended his choice. The horizons of “I” are the complement of “the observed”. “I” was the author, but unlike the omniscient and all-powerful author of the historical horizon, “I” only built a bridge between historical horizon and the vision of the novel, allowing more observers to pass through and exchange values. It can be seen that through the unique perspectives of the “observer” and “the observed”, the novel horizon further reflects on and dialogues the historical reality.

Above all, through constant exposure and revelation, Fowles enables readers to see the feminist, existential philosophy, and the fictional nature of the novel, which is obscured by the historical horizon. “He focuses on those aspects of the Victorian era that would seem most alien to a modern reader. In particular, he is concerned with Victorian attitudes towards women, economics, science, and philosophy. In this romance, Fowles examines the problems of two socially and economically oppressed groups in nineteenth-century England: the poverty of the working and servant classes, and the economic and social entrapment of women (Bellman, 2022).” All in all, through in-depth dialogue, the fusion of two horizons expands rich meanings. It eulogizes modern people reflecting on the past, pursuing independence and freedom, and daring to break the shackles and go beyond the definition of individuality.

## 2.2 The Dialogue Between the Film Horizon and the Historical Horizon

Historical horizon in film is based on both historical memories in traditional Victorian literature and newly discovered historical authenticity in the novel. The dialogue is cleverly placed in a simultaneous space: with the crew filming the 19th-century romance of the Charles and Sarah as the central axis, two parallel stories derived from both sides of the axis - one is a typical Victorian romance with settings mostly from Fowles’ source novel; the other, set in the present, is a off-screen story between Mike and Anna, the two actors portraying of the Charles and Sarah respectively, eventually ends in Mike’s return to his family and Anna to her lover. Art and real life seem to be two opposite lines, going to different ends, but they swim with each other and skillfully integrate. In the film horizon, the two lines cross at certain moments (such as in the scene where Sarah’s skirt is tripped by thorns in Anna and Mike’s rehearsal) and then go along the trajectory of different choice. In the end, the two otherwise parallel stories have different outcomes - the two pairs of protagonists chose the complete opposite path in the face of immoral romance. The film horizon coincides with the “historical inversion” in bakhtin’s chronotope theory, that

is, the purpose, ideal, justice, perfection, the harmonious state of man and society, etc. are all limited to the past, and the “historical inversion” actually conveys a sense of nothingness about the future.

Harold Pinter’s script obscures the borders between the parallel events (Gale, 2001). He uses interweaving strategies to expand the story, retaining the traditional narrative elements in the novel and scattering them in the film (some not in the original order), intertwined with a newly talk to convey the substance of the novel’s thought. “what he and director Karel Reisz have done with their film, *The French Lieutenant’s Woman*, is both simple and brilliant. They have frankly discarded the multi-layered fictional devices of John Fowles, and tried to create a new cinematic approach that will achieve the same ambiguity (Ebert, 1981).” Pinter thought Reisz solved the dilemma (to have the author on screen) brilliantly, by proposing that the actors playing Sarah and Charles in 1860 also play the actors themselves in the present, so that the two narratives run concurrently and the perspectives constantly shift. The two narratives, in other words, complement and illuminate each other (Pinter, 2000). This translation is consistent with Pinter’s philosophy: “Our desire to check the facts is understandable, but this desire is often not met. In fact, there is no unquestionable boundary between the real and the unreal, the true and the false. Everything is not necessarily right or wrong, it may be both right and wrong (Wang & Zhou, 1994).”

In terms of the construction of the film horizon, Pinter extended “tension” from his play *Betrayal* (first produced 1978), which mainly tells a story about an extramarital affair, and it shows, as Pinter stated, the ethical conflict between free will, irrational will, and rational will. *Betrayal* comes from the Pinter’s real emotional life. From 1962 to 1969, Pinter had a seven-year extramarital affair with BBC reporter Joan Bakwell, after which he experienced the failure of the marriage, and this experience and reflection were featured in his play. In the 1960s, after experiencing the wave of sexual liberation ideas, Western society linked sexual freedom with other freedom views, completely subverted the traditional concept of sexual morality and conventions, and most people believe that the sexual relationship between adults is not immoral and extramarital affairs are tacitly acquiesced in the ethical environment. In his several plays, Pinter believes that the morality of sexual freedom reflects the misunderstanding of sexual freedom and loyalty, and the choice to return home is a manifestation of the return of ethical consciousness. That is why when Anna and Mike in the film have an extramarital affair during filming the script, Pinter sets the emotional ending of the two lovers the same as the lovers in *Betrayal*, one of them (Anna) evokes the rational will, and finally chooses to end the extramarital affair and return to the family, and the free will and irrational will of a period of unrequited love

are finally controlled by reason. Pinter placed his thoughts on marriage and relationship in his adaption.

In the film horizon, the historical horizon as a whole presents a depressing tone: dim lights, melancholy music, the poignant figures under the rainy and cold wind, and the mysterious ethereal atmosphere on the seashore. A dialogue between past and present establishes with film language. The color of past life is dark but modern is bright, the background music of is blue but modern is cheerful, Sarah dresses black to show her oppressed and bound emotional state, while Anna dresses brightly, reflecting her promising and cheerful feelings. However, at the end of the story, the visual effects of the two exchange. Sarah resists the shackles and actively pursues a better life, and sails from black darkness to clear water and blue sky with Charles, so that the background light changes from dark to bright. While Anna chose to flee away without saying goodbye; Mike calls out to Anna from an upstairs window as she drives away, the background turned dark, and the music brass blue and he called out but using her character name, Sarah. The visual contrast before and after makes two perspectives refer to each other: a Victorian woman seek to independence and freedom while a modern woman is spurned by convention and illusion, a passion that grows in a free society but finally gives up painfully. This reference is also implicit the distance between the spatial characters in the development of feelings, Sarah and Charles from estrangement to closeness, from rejection to acceptance, while Anna and Mike are from intimacy to estrangement, from intimacy to distance. The audience is placed in an alternating sequence of a rigid Victorian society but an energetic individual will, and the fresher modern life but heavier individual growth, watching the great moral divide between past and present. The Victorian love story would just a Victorian fictional romance but real life is more complex, uncertain and contradictory.

### 2.3 The Dialogue Between the Novel Horizon and the Film Horizon

Film adaptation is a subjective process of interpreting the source novel. Geoffrey Wagner suggests three possible categories to analyze the relation between literary fiction and its film adaptation: (a) transposition, ‘in which a novel is given directly on the screen with a minimum of apparent interference’; (b) commentary, “where an original is taken and either purposely or inadvertently altered in some respect . . . when there has been a different intention on the part of the film-maker, rather than infidelity or outright violation’; and (c) analogy, which must represent a fairly considerable departure for the sake of making another work of art” (Wagner, 1975) . Michael Klein and Gillian Parker puts forward by a similar classification: (a) “fidelity to the main thrust of the narrative”; (b) the approach which “retains the core of the structure of the narrative while significantly reinterpreting or, in some

cases, deconstructing the source text”; and (c) regarding “the source merely as raw material, as simply the occasion for an original work” (Klein & Parker, 1981). Desmond and Hawkes differ category in three types as well. “Most of the story elements in literary works are retained in the film, and only a few elements are abandoned or added, and we call it a compact adaptation; and when the literary work is only used as a starting point, and most of the plot is discarded, we call it a loose adaptation; when a film neither fully conforms to nor completely separates from the literary work, but is between a tight adaptation and a loose change, we call it a medium-type adaptation (Desmond & Hawkes, 2005).” The film adaptation of *The French Lieutenant’s Woman* more derives techniques of “analogy” and “loose adaptation”, which get inspiration from the original, and “deconstruct the source text”. It reflects the ultimate pursuit of depth and breadth of the fusion of horizon, embodies an extremely fine adaptation and creation ability, which not only echoes the reproduction of the historical horizon embodied in the source novel in form, but also achieves transcendence in meaning.

The transcendence of film horizon to the novel horizon is first reflected in the innovation of narrative techniques. Including device of “story in story” structure and montage film techniques, the film horizon turn language and words into visual symbols, so that meaning is expressed through visual imagery. Moreover, the correspondence of the film horizon to the novel horizon is not to follow the trend, but to significantly delete and innovate the original content. In the film, the critic “I” retreats and is replaced by the shooting camera and two actors, through the dialogue between the actors and the role they play, so that the state of life in present and past simultaneously display in an open way. Trapped in nostalgia, the “Victorian fever” reached its peak in Western societies in the eighties and nineties of the last century. That deep nostalgic personal emotion was completely transformed in postmodernism into a new and always present life of extraordinary euphoria and schizophrenia (Jameson, 1997). The English realistic literary works in the nineteenth century always gave a biting explosion of the greedy, hypocrisy and sordidness of the bourgeoisie and a sympathetic description of small common people. The common character, though lived in poverty and misery and some saved by progressive intellectuals, they gained ultimate freedom in the New Victorian fictions and eventually strive to win the past. Victorian youth are serious and enthusiastic about life and rebel against traditional norms. By contrast, Modern people return to traditional norms. The fusion of the two horizons blend the pursuit of historical memory and the current situation of existence with each other, suggesting the cycle of life under the interlacing of time and space, and also hinting at the spiritual dilemma across generations.

In addition, the fusion of the two horizons demonstrates the eternity of human nature. The story

of a hundred years ago contains the roots of modernity: female dominance, the dullness of people’s feelings of ordinary life, the rebellious spirit of the enlightened, the individual’s pursuit of freedom and liberation. The harshness of ethics and the authority have been and are being questioned; the rebellion that surges under the repression of human nature is praised; the holiness and shyness of the “angels of the family” are ridiculed, the mystery and wildness of the “fallen” are sacred. In the film horizon, Sarah sacrifices her virginity at the hotel, but constantly repeats to Charles, “I am not worthy of you.” She refused to marry Charles. But, she added, “You have given me the consolation of believing that in another world, another age, another life. I might have been your wife. You have given me the strength to go on living... in the here and now.” While Anna lives in the twentieth century, indeed “in another world, another age, another life”, seemingly without restraint and confinement, completely autonomous, but she still, like Sarah in the 19th century, chose to marry the soul mate. In contrast, history has become an object of praise, and individuals can obtain a free and autonomous life through struggle. Present in the film is infinitely disappointed, and seems to retreat into the repressive, hypocritical Victorian conventions.

Juxtaposed reading promotes readers and audiences to contemplate meanings from the gap between two texts, which not only show the depth of understanding from a more comprehensive perspective, but also convey different philosophical views in a sense. Fowles stated in his 1969 *Notes on an Unfinished Novel* that “The novel I’m writing at the moment (provisionally entitled *The French Lieutenant’s Woman*) is set about a hundred years back. I don’t think of it as a historical novel. A genre in which I have very little interest.” Fowles openly declared a break with the tradition of realism. Both Fowles and Pinter are post modernists and believe the creator (writer, playwright) is not omniscient and omnipresent. While studying in Oxford, Fowles was heavily influenced by French existentialist Sartre and Camus, who reflecting the discussion of a series of philosophical issues like existence and freedom, chance and necessity, choice and destiny. Pinter acknowledges that the absurdist playwright Beckett had the greatest influence on him, and his works always focus on the anxiety and panic of the contemporary human soul from the most prosaic everyday dialogues. The phenomenon of contradiction and the mastery of ambiguity are the greatest features in his play. “Pinter’s plays are ambivalent in their plots, presentation of characters, and endings, but they are works of undeniable power and originality (Britannica, 2022).” It can be seen that the film horizon does not correspond to the novel horizon in a general sense, but a deep discussion and response to existential philosophy.

When novel and the adaptation are interpreted juxtaposed, the extended meaning seems to subvert the

meaning of the individuals, further revealing a third meaning—a deeper understanding of the complexity of human nature. The novel horizon deconstructs the meaning of the traditional historical horizon, and the film horizon deconstructs the meaning of the novel horizon. The significance of this macro and deep dialogue between the three horizons is that it gives history a voice, connecting the present with the past that is flying away from us.

### 3. THE ENLIGHTENMENT AND DISCOVERY OF JUXTAPOSED READING

#### 3.1 Inspire Possibilities for a Burst of Creativity

Since film and its source novel are independent of their own constructed horizons and have closed connections with the world related, the dialogue with horizon subjects buried in them will present our in-depth thinking and unremitting exploration of truth, goodness and beauty to a greatest extent. Through juxtaposed reading, the constructive meaning between film and its source novel can be fully presented, either respond to each other, or refute, or affirm, or supplement, or as a premise, or to extend. The interpretation of the two texts is an interpretation of the eras beyond the text, resulting in the meaning not be fixed and standardized and always in the infinite possibilities of future generation.

It is precisely because of the fusion of horizons that the infinite process of meaning discovery unfolds, and thus new understandings, new interpretations, and new truths are constantly produced. It in turn offers possibilities for new experiences and new understandings. Thus, the interpretation is not fixed and constrained, but is forever in the state of developing, without a possibility of confirmation. It is this unfinished nature that offers us an opportunity to define another interpretation, to form our own discursive horizon, and to stimulate our own creativity.

#### 3.2 Reshape a Future Film Adaptation Study

Film adaptation is a fusion of a cross-media, cross-cultural, and cross-time text. It can be summarized into three categories as well. The first is the maximum integration of film adaptation and the author's horizon, that is, the writer's horizon and the adapter's horizon are completely equivalent; the second is the fusion of film horizon and the writer's horizon to a greatest extent, while the adapter's horizon is revealed and expressed; the third is the fusion of the film horizon and the writer's horizon to a greatest extent, while the adapter's horizon is revealed, but specially reflect the problem horizon of its age.

Since the adapter is in a specific historical conditions and status, the biggest challenge the adapter face is not the challenge of converting the text discourse into the discourse of the film, but the challenge of having a broader horizon, and excavating the tension from the

depth and breadth. The adapter constantly returns to its own horizon, at the same time, he constantly merges with other related horizons, and finally completes the transcendence or echo of the source novel. Merging with others and maintaining a certain distance guarantees an excess of cognition (Bakhtin, 1998).

Film adaptations in future can coincide with the source literature, can be mutually extended, and can also be a reflection and impact of each other. Regardless of the form, adaptation must reflect a wide range of explanatory power and creativity, make the voice of the time, and highlight the current problem, only in this way can it truly resonate with the audience. We have every reason to believe that future film adaptations will focus more on convergence of horizons.

### CONCLUSION

Since novel and its film adaptation are two intersecting but essentially independent texts, different horizon subjects emerged in them construct a relation of collision, superposition, extension, expansion, mutual learning, analysis and comparison. Only through dialogue can we experience process of infinite discovery, and reach a new horizon goes beyond the horizon of the writer, the adapter, and beyond the previous biases of the interpreter, ultimately reaching a higher and newer level of understanding. It is an obvious fact that the juxtaposed reading of film and its source novel plays a pivotal role in literary appreciation. The juxtaposed reading of film and its source novel from the perspective of fusion of horizons more fully displayed the openness, infinity and creative characteristics of the text, and enables us to produce new understandings, new interpretations. The findings of juxtaposed reading enlighten and inspire our creative horizon as well as our study for a future film adaptation.

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