

An Intertextual Study of the Appropriation and Parody of Joyce's "The Dead" and Tolstoy's "the Death of Ivan Ilych" in Ali Mosafa's "The Last Step"

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Extended Abstract

Introduction

James Joyce's seminal story "The Dead" has long captivated literary scholars, inspiring critical debates and creative reimaginings. In Iran, acclaimed filmmaker Ali Mosaffa has crafted a cinematic work that engages in a parodic dialogue with both Joyce's masterpiece and Leo Tolstoy's "The Death of Ivan Ilyich." However, Mosaffa's *The Last Step* is no mere adaptation; rather, it employs a postmodern strategy of appropriation, incorporating elements of the source texts while subverting and parodying them within the context of Iranian culture. Through the lens of intertextuality, *The Last Step* emerges as a playful and whimsical interpretation of the themes and motifs found in Joyce and Tolstoy, refracted through the prism of traditional Iranian music and architecture. The film's layered narration, blending of genres, and incorporation of Iranian cultural elements create a palimpsest of meaning, inviting the viewer to engage in a game of literary and cultural cross-pollination.

Aim

This comparative study delves into the intricate layers of intertextuality in Ali Mosaffa's film *The Last Step*, revealing how it engages in a parodic dialogue with James Joyce's "The Dead" and Leo Tolstoy's "The Death of Ivan Ilyich." By examining the film's playful interpretation of themes and motifs within the Iranian cultural context, this research aims to shed light on the creative process of appropriation and parody in cinematic adaptations of literary works. Through a close analysis of *The Last Step*, this study highlights the innovative ways in which Mosaffa incorporates traditional Iranian music and architecture to create a unique cinematic experience that both pays homage to and subverts its literary subtexts. The research also explores how the film's use of parody and humor offers fresh insights into the integration of cultural elements with literary adaptations for cinema.

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Theoretical Framework and Methodology

The study of adaptation is a multidisciplinary field that encompasses both literary and cinematic research. It involves comparative literary studies, examining the adaptation of a source text into a target text, as well as cinematic studies that are part of comparative literary studies. The concept of intertextuality plays a crucial role in this framework, as it highlights the relationships between different texts and how they interact with each other. The process of adaptation involves intertextual dialogue, which is the concept of appropriation and self-refashioning that occurs during the transition from one medium to another. This dialogue is established through various techniques, including parody, which is a major method used in *The Last Step*. Parody involves the playful and intentional use of elements from the source texts, such as Joyce's "The Dead" and Tolstoy's "The Death of Ivan Ilyich," to create a new narrative that engages with the original works in a creative and humorous manner. The narrative structure of *The Last Step* is characterized by multiple layers of narration, including the outer narrative of Khosrow's death and the inner narrative of a film within a film. This structure allows for the exploration of themes and motifs related to the past, which are embedded in the narrative through intertextual relationships among written, cinematic, musical, and architectural elements. The study also draws on theoretical perspectives from adaptation studies, intertextuality, and narrative theory to provide a comprehensive understanding of the film's intertextual dialogue. The theoretical framework of this study provides a comprehensive understanding of the intertextual dialogue in *The Last Step*.

Discussion

The film *The Last Step* by Ali Mosaffa is a parodic intertextual work that incorporates elements of James Joyce's "The Dead" and Leo Tolstoy's "The Death of Ivan Ilyich" within the Iranian cultural context. This study examines the ways in which the film engages in a playful parody of its literary subtexts, using various techniques such as multiple layers of narration and the incorporation of traditional Iranian music and architecture. The film's narrative structure is characterized by multiple layers of narration, including the outer narrative of Khosrow's death and the inner narrative of a film within a film. This structure allows for the exploration of themes and motifs related to the past, which are embedded in the narrative through intertextual relationships among written, cinematic, musical, and architectural elements. The film establishes intertextual relationships with both written and cinematic subtexts. At the level of discourse, the film is a hypo-text in relation to Joyce's and Tolstoy's stories, which serve as the main subtext. The film also has intertextual relationships with various cinematic, musical, and architectural hypo-texts, including traditional Iranian songs and architecture. These relationships range from explicit and direct to implicit and playful, and are mainly parodic. The film's use of parody and appropriation is a key aspect of its intertextual dialogue. The film's title, *The Last Step*, suggests a playful and intentional engagement with its literary subtexts. The film's narrative structure and

representation, which combine elements of the source texts with traditional Iranian music and architecture, create a complex and multifaceted intertextual dialogue. The film's use of nostalgia, particularly through the incorporation of traditional Iranian music and architecture, creates a bridge between literary works and the film. This nostalgia serves to connect the literary works to the film, highlighting the cultural context in which the film is set. In conclusion, *The Last Step* is a parodic intertextual work that engages in a playful dialogue with its literary subtexts. The film's use of multiple layers of narration, intertextual relationships, and parody and appropriation creates a complex and multifaceted narrative structure. The film's incorporation of traditional Iranian music and architecture adds a cultural context that highlights the significance of nostalgia in the film.

Findings and Conclusion

The Last Step is a parodic intertextual work that engages in a playful dialogue with its literary subtexts. The film's use of multiple layers of narration, intertextual relationships, and parody and appropriation creates a complex and multifaceted narrative structure. The film's incorporation of traditional Iranian music and architecture adds a cultural context that highlights the significance of nostalgia in the film. Here come some new findings:

1. Parodic Intertextuality: The film *The Last Step* employs parodic intertextuality by incorporating elements of James Joyce's "The Dead" and Leo Tolstoy's "The Death of Ivan Ilyich" within the Iranian cultural context, engaging in playful parody.
2. Traditional Music and Architecture: The film embeds traditional Iranian music and architecture within the narrative, connecting it to nostalgia, creating a bridge between literary works and the film. This nostalgia serves to connect the literary works to the film, highlighting the cultural context in which the film is set.
3. Nostalgia and Cultural Context: Nostalgia, through parodic intertextuality, creates a network of complex relationships between written and musical texts and architecture, connecting literary works to the film. This cultural context is significant in understanding the film's intertextual dialogue.
4. New Insights into Adaptation: The film through parodic intertextuality offers new insights into the adaptation of literary works for cinema, particularly in the context of two distinct Iranian and non-Iranian cultures, which may assist other filmmakers in considering literary elements for cinema.
5. Parodic Intertextual Relationships: The film's parodic intertextual relationships provide fresh insights into the integration of cultural elements with literary adaptations for cinema. This study highlights the creative and playful ways in which the film engages with its literary subtexts.
6. Intertextual Motifs: The motif of laughter serves as an intertextual motif indicating a significant connection between the hypo-text and the subtext. This motif is used to create a connection between the literary works and the film.

7. Narrative Structure: The film's narrative structure, characterized by multiple layers of narration, allows for the exploration of themes and motifs related to the past, which are embedded in the narrative through intertextual relationships among written, cinematic, musical, and architectural elements.
8. Parody and Humor: The film uses parody and humor to depict literary works, creating a playful and whimsical interpretation of themes and motifs within the Iranian cultural context.
9. Intertextual Dialogue: The film's intertextual dialogue is established through various techniques, including parody, which is a major method used in *The Last Step*. This dialogue is playful, intentional, and parodic, engaging in a creative and humorous manner with its literary subtexts.

Keywords: appropriation, parody, parodying intertextuality, "The Dead", *The Last Step*, "The Death of Ivan Illych".

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