

Reimagining Literature: Integrating Cultural, Film, and Multimodal Perspectives for Sustainability

Abstract

Literature, known for its aestheticity, has been a dominant social science and humanities study field for centuries. People believe it helps the students become proficient in language skills (LSRW). Literature's textual regimentation and the formalist fallacy of the 'print-centric' notion started to shake after the intervention of Cultural Studies, known for the 'anti-literature' approach. In the post-pandemic period, education has drastically changed because of the online mode of teaching and Artificial intelligence (AI), which shut the capacity of learning in visual and virtual space. Students lost interest in reading books and newspapers, replaced by mobile phone applications and the World Wide Web. The legacy of literature and 'print' reading started to decline in the present period. The paper tries to analyse the amelioration of literature and literary studies by including cultural studies, film studies, media studies and digital literature with multimodality for its sustainability. The combination of these studies with literature is not indicative of losing its importance in the 21st century. Instead, it reflects the evolving nature of literary studies and the recognition that literature exists within a larger cultural and media landscape by incorporating new mediums of storytelling. It also offers a broader skill set that appeals to employers seeking critical thinkers with strong communication skills.

Keywords: e-literature, textual regimentation, literature sustainability, multimodal literature

Introduction

In the post-covid era, the teaching and learning platform has changed from physical to virtual-cyber spaces. Modern Millennials and Gen Zives are in scroll/shorts mode, and they are not ready to spend time acquiring knowledge through books. They need everything instantly, which is also applicable to gain knowledge or obtain information immediately with the help of Google or ChatGPT. The three dimensions of space are replaced by two dimensions of 'what seems to see.' Multimedia sources have become a more important source

of information for people today. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), students spent an average of ten hours a day in 2003 exposed to at least one form of multimedia, ranging from MP3 music files to films, television and the Internet. This consumption has increased in recent years with the rise of streaming services, social media, and virtual reality. Multimedia is now integral to our lives, providing entertainment, information, and education. Students often know more about this multimedia world than their teachers do. It has shifted how educators teach and interact with students, with teachers adjusting to the constantly evolving **multimedia landscape. They immerse themselves in it. Educators have had to become tech-savvy to stay current and keep up with their students. They have had to learn to use various multimedia** tools, such as streaming services, social media, and virtual reality, to teach their students (Eisenmann & Summer, 2020; Thompson & McIlnay, 2019; Murphy, 2009; Gu & Catalano, 2022).

Additionally, they must tap into their students' existing knowledge to help them get the most out of the learning experience. However, despite their knowledge of navigating a high-tech world, they do not possess the ability to 'read' it. By preserving the great classics and rewarding traditional reading and writing skills, classicists such as Samuel Johnson protect and keep the great classics. It should be noted that despite what we teach in the English classroom or how passionate our passion for printed texts may be, the vast majority of students are inherently more interested in **multimedia, such as films, television, advertisements, audiobooks, and the Internet than they are in traditional print texts. Even if English teachers do their best, students will likely be exposed to films, advertisements, and social media trends (and drawn to them) more frequently than books.** Burke emphasises the importance of using new forms of texts to teach "textual intelligence," which involves what texts say and how they function (81). As students are exposed to increasingly 'non-print-centric texts' outside the classroom, the educational curriculum resolved "to support the integration of multimedia composition into English language arts curriculum and teacher education" (Burke 81). Even if a teacher of English presents printed texts enthusiastically, students will still be drawn to multimedia texts. As a teacher, the ability to foster textual analysis skills using different media will affect how much students can read these new and changing texts critically. Therefore, teachers must be willing to embrace new media to teach English effectively. Literature and the practice of reading some books have started to decline in the present period. By considering cultural studies, film studies, media studies, and digital literature, the paper seeks to analyse the improvement of literature and literary studies. In the

21st century, combining these studies with literature does not indicate that literature is losing its importance. Incorporating new storytelling mediums reflects the evolving nature of literary studies and the recognition that literature is part of a larger cultural and media landscape. Additionally, it provides employers with a broader skill set that appeals to those seeking creative thinkers who are effective communicators.

Cultural Studies:

Cultural studies aim to understand the operation of culture, especially in the contemporary world, in its broadest sense: how cultural productions function and how cultural identities are constructed and arranged for individuals and groups in the context of heterogeneous and interconnected communities, state power, the media industry, and multinational corporations. Thus, literary studies, which focus on literature as a distinct cultural practice, fall under the umbrella of cultural studies. Professors of literature have shifted their focus to literary theory, as discussed by Jonathan Culler in *Literary Theory: A Very Short Introduction* (1997): “from Milton to Madonna, from Shakespeare to soap operas, abandoning the study of literature together” (42). From a literary perspective, Culler treats ‘theory’ and ‘culture studies’ differently. In the broadest sense, if theory refers to a theory of anything, anything would have to be related to “signifying practices,” the creation and representation of experiences, and the constitution of human subjects (Culler 42).

It is striking that the field of cultural studies, as it has developed, is as confusingly interdisciplinary and as difficult to define as ‘theory’ itself. One could say that the two go together: ‘theory’ is the theory, and cultural studies the practice. Cultural studies is the practice of which what we call ‘theory’ for short is the theory. Work in cultural studies is, in fact, deeply dependent on the theoretical debates about meaning, identity, representation, and agency that I take up in this book. (Culler 43)

Cultural Studies is also called ‘anti-literature’ because it lacks *literariness*, which means “literariness” (Shklovsky 28). Cultural theorists contempt the ideology of insisting on ‘print-centric’ texts as “formalist fallacies” by avoiding other art/text in different mediums (Shklovsky 218). Cultural studies are driven by the inherent tension between studying mass culture as an ideological imposition and an oppressive ideological construction and the desire to recover popular culture as the expression of the people or give voice to the

culture of oppressed groups. Studying popular culture can be seen as a way to bridge the gap between the worlds of aesthetics and academics and that of everyday people. On the other hand, there is a robust drive to expose how cultural influences mould and control individuals.

Cultural studies is about the struggle between the analyst's desire to find a tangible manifestation of worth in popular culture and their goal to analyse culture as a collection of codes and practises that alienate people from their interests and create their desires. One answer is to demonstrate that individuals may create their own culture from the media and aesthetics that capitalist society provides them. Mass culture gives birth to popular culture. As a result of drawing inspiration from sources that are diametrically opposed to it, popular culture is an adversarial culture engaged in a constant battle with mass culture. The intersection of cultural and literary studies has become a thorny issue. Shakespeare and rap music, high culture and vulgar, ancient and modern—in theory, cultural studies may cover it all. However, cultural studies are pursued as opposed to other fields because meaning is founded on distinction.

Since cultural studies evolved from literary studies, this question is usually answered with “as opposed to literary studies, traditionally conceived,” where the focus is on analysing literary works in terms of their authors' accomplishments. The main argument for studying literature was the unique worth of great works in their complexity, beauty, insight, universality, and potential to improve readers' lives (Culler 52). However, literary studies has never been unified around a conventional or otherwise agreed-upon concept of what it was doing. Since theory, it has been notably contentious and contested, with many projects studying literary and non-literary works competing for attention. Thus, literary and cultural studies need not conflict. Literary studies differs from cultural studies in its interpretation of literary texts. The cultural studies field developed from the transfer of literary criticism to other forms of cultural production. Instead of being mere things to be tallied, “cultural artefacts are viewed as ‘texts’ to be read” (Culler 53). And vice versa, it could benefit literary studies if literature were examined as a distinct cultural practice and if works were contextualised concerning other discourses. Theory has expanded the concerns literary works can address and highlighted the many ways they question or complicate existing assumptions. Cultural studies emphasise literature as one signifying practice among others and investigate literature's cultural roles, which can help us comprehend literature as a complex intertextual phenomenon.

Film Studies:

The traditionalist belief that literature must take the form of printed text is challenged by cultural studies, which take a practical approach. Literature is governed by a textual insulence that insists on the importance of the printed word over all other medium forms. The effect of postmodern painting and architecture on literature, the rhythm of poetry and music, and play written for performance yet set in a static environment are all examples of how literature has developed as an interdisciplinary field (motion picture in films). Oral literature, paintings, comics, and visual literature are now accepted as the textual regimentation of literature has been dissolved. All forms of artistic expression are mirrors of society and culture. Gathering other types of art in different mediums can help dethrone text from its dominant position.

Media studies, communication theories, museum studies, film studies, and art criticism are only a few fields to which cultural studies has opened the door. As Marshall McLuhan argued in *Understanding Media*, "Medium is the Message," film studies are critical to the cultural study of forming ideologies in social construction (56). Contrary to other forms of communication, such as books, visuals can be understood by anyone. Film Studies is a subfield of cultural studies that takes an ideologically critical look at a film's content, setting, development, production, and dissemination. It includes both the analysis of films' visual styles and their texts. While the audience's creative vision in a literary text tends to result in a more accurate understanding, the filmmakers of a film imply their pictures to the audience. The elements of a movie combine the elements of a literary text with those of sound and picture. Movies are more than just a form of entertainment. Due to the characteristics of the medium used in films, they are typically built with multiple layers that are hidden from view.

The cinematic medium serves as a means of expressing one's cultural values and being an art form. Film has been elevated from the realm of amusement to that of the Seventh Art by UNESCO. Film Studies and Television Studies are the primary branches of Media Studies that enter into contemporary Cultural Studies. Literature and filmmaking are frequently combined in film adaptations because they work together well. Both represent the intellectual and spiritual pursuits of their respective creators. The greatest critically and commercially acclaimed films have often been adaptations of literature. In the early days of cinema, this was the primary way scripts were created. According to the adage, literature reflects life, and today's mass media, including movies and television, do the same. The

curriculum places no value on deciding which art form is better. Through Cultural Studies, the study of films and television became visual literature.

“‘Film Studies is the English degree of the 21st century,’ says Professor Emily Carman.”

-(Kalaji)

Literature always has the regimentation of textual approach among the works of art. Professor Carman’s evaluation reflects two connected realities; she does not minimise the importance of literature research. The benefits of the visual media’s ascendancy over written language are extensively and vehemently discussed in several arenas outside of academia. And second, many young people are drawn to the study of cinema because it is a topic they enjoy. Films are the 20th century’s literary masterpieces. The film is a shared experience of one another and explores life’s significant issues. Historically, literature has served this function, but in modern times, film has a far wider audience and, thus, a more pervasive impact. Everyone would take the time to read and analyse the classics. If academicians do not consider movies’ contributions to the dialogue, the curriculum will miss the main discourse about the stories that tell each other.

The amalgamation of literature and film studies is viewed as an interdisciplinary and intertextual approach that should bridge the gap. The study supports that movies are artistic creations, just like books. By examining precursors and analysing the interrelationship between these two fields, the article also looks at film studies with the intermediary function of bridging literature and cinema. It also examines the most dominant trends in film studies in Western academia, emphasises the significance of film in philology, and exhorts humanities experts to participate in creating film analyses, notably via the critical prism of literary theory.

Cinema grants artists the ultimate instrument for accomplishing a previously unachievable goal: the presentation or representation of the world of human experience in a Gesamtkunstwerk, a work that incorporates all of the arts (Winkler 11).

In particular, Winkler’s work considers movies to be visual “texts” that may be critically examined like classical texts. Gerald Mast is another writer, academic, and cinema historian who has done much work on film theory and critique. The scholar summed up cinema criticism into areas of conflict: In contrast to the humanities (literature, philosophy,

art history, and aesthetics) that inform empirical-phenomenological cinema theory, the social sciences provide the intellectual foundation for the emerging field of poststructuralist film theory (anthropology, sociology, psychology, economics). Poststructuralist cinema critics, in contrast to their humanist counterparts, are interested in a work of art only insofar as it discloses (and conceals) the cultural attitudes that generated it and the cultural goals which it serves.

Studies of film are rarely taken seriously by the literary community. Academics and scholars from the traditional literary canon view films as off-limits, discouraging young researchers from pursuing careers in film studies. Indian schools continue to use colonial-era pedagogical practises and frameworks in their lessons. Most people consider English Literature to be a language class. However, it is mainly concerned with mediaeval and early modern literary works written in English and social history in England. There is no denying that it also incorporates, albeit indirectly, other literature(s), critical methods and theories, translation studies, and language instruction. Universities and colleges place more emphasis on memorisation, recitation, and rote learning than they do on helping students develop creative thought, critical analysis, solid reasoning, and an appreciation of the interconnection of diverse disciplines of study. During the post-COVID era, visual media gradually replaced the linguistic medium of books as the dominant means of communication. Many Western colleges now offer degrees in English Literature and Film Studies because they view the former as antiquated. The article makes a futuristic argument that movies should be required reading shortly. The only long-term strategy is to increase enrollment in literary classes. Learning a language requires more than just hearing, reading, and writing; thus, it is essential to incorporate Visual/Watching Skills with Listening, Speaking, Reading & Writing (LSRW).

Digital Literature:

Digital literature, sometimes known as 'e-literature' or 'electronic literature,' refers to literary works written specifically for digital consumption and feature aspects exclusive to the electronic format. It is a type of creative expression that uses modern computing to tell stories that are not only immersive but also dynamic and full of multimedia elements. It frequently lets the reader take part in the tale by making decisions that have consequences or interacting with the content in a way that is not linear like *Choose Your Own Adventure* novel is a form of interactive fiction.

Hypertext is commonly used in digital literature to provide a non-linear reading experience by linking together disparate sections of text. With hypertext, the reader can decide how to go through the content. One of the most famous works of hypertext fiction is *Afternoon: A Story*, written by Michael Joyce. It uses a variety of media formats to enrich the reading experience, including photos, videos, animations, and audio. These multimedia components might serve as either primary or supplementary material to the story. Kate Pullinger and Chris Joseph's *Inanimate Alice* is an excellent example of a story that uses multimedia components. Algorithms and code are used in generative literature to construct narratives that can change with each reading. Examples of generative poetry can be found in "Taroko Gorge" and other works of Nick Montfort.

Multiple authors or readers can now contribute to a single narrative through digital platforms and social media. Collaborative storytelling and disseminating literary works are made more accessible by online communities, blogs, and platforms like Wattpad. Novel reading experiences are being made using augmented and virtual reality technologies. While virtual reality (VR) literature creates an immersive digital experience, augmented reality (AR) literature merely adds digital content to the real world. One piece of virtual reality literature that does so is Aardman's *We Wait*. Traditional textuality is pushed to its limits while new narrative avenues are opened up by digital literature. The nature of storytelling and the connection between author and reader are common topics. Understanding modern literary forms and the changing environment of narrative in the digital age requires an examination of e-literature. In contrast, electronic literature is "digitally born," meaning that it is a first-generation digital entity made on a computer and is (often) intended to be read on a computer. (Hayles 21).

[The aim] is to promote the writing, publishing, and reading of literature in electronic media, convened a committee headed by Noah Wardrip-Fruin, himself a creator and critic of electronic literature, to develop a definition appropriate to this new field. The choice was framed to include both work performed in digital media and work created on a computer but published in print, as, for example, Brian Kim Stefans's computer-generated poem, "Stops and Rebels": "work with an important literary aspect that takes advantage of the capabilities and contexts provided by the stand-alone or networked computer." (Hayles 21)

These days, coding permeates every aspect of our written and digital writings. Commercial printing processes have become so digitally integrated that print is now more accurately thought of as a specific output form of electronic text rather than a completely independent medium. However, electronic text still differs from printed material because it cannot be read until the appropriate code is run. Understanding electronic literature and respecting its uniqueness as a literary and technical production requires an awareness of the close relationship between the text's code and its performance. The structure and specifics of the coding give rise to new forms of writing that are now considered standard in the electronic literature canon. As a result, it's not unexpected that some styles are now commonly identified by the programs used to produce and perform them.

Multimodal Literature: Future, Survival and Sustainability

Traditional 'print-centric' literature finds it difficult to sustain its place in modern academics. The birth of new academic disciplines from interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary perspectives made literature 'outdated' or 'old.' After the intervention of Cultural Studies in the 1960s, the ideology of traditional literature has been changing. Top colleges and universities around the world offer degrees in film and English, including the University of California, Berkeley (USA), the University of Exeter (UK), King's College London (UK), the University of East Anglia (UK), and the University of Southampton (UK); the University of Warwick (UK) offers a Bachelor of Arts in both Film and English and an Honours Bachelor of Arts in English and Cultural Studies; the University of Glasgow (UK) offers a Bachelor of Arts in Film and Television Studies with English Literature; and the Universities of English literature is not diminishing in relevance because BA programmes in the United Kingdom and the United States often pair it with Cultural Studies, Film Studies, or Media Studies or because similar programmes exist in other countries. That literature is understood to be part of a larger cultural and media milieu illustrates the developing character of literary studies. There has been no decline in the significance of English literature; instead, it has adapted to include new ways of presenting stories.

Digital media, graphic novels, and other forms of visual storytelling have expanded the definition of literature in recent years. These changes can be addressed by combining the study of English Literature with that of Media and Cultural Studies. Universities that offer Film Studies give their students a well-rounded education in how narrative and culture can be expressed via various genres. Career opportunities in the film industry are as varied as the

study of cinema itself. Employers want candidates who can think critically and communicate effectively; thus, combining it with English Literature broadens your marketability.

Because of Cultural Studies, the role and nature of text have changed drastically with the transition from print-centric literature to digital literature. Not only has how literature is consumed shifted but so has how audiences participate in and respond to narratives. Besides text, standard components of digital literature include visuals, audio, motion graphics, and user interaction. As the text's function broadens, it becomes one element of a richer, multimodal whole. Hyperlinks, clickable components, and interactive interfaces encourage the reader to participate with the text in digital literature. The reader is no longer merely an observer but an active player who can choose their path through the story. Unlike traditional literature, which is usually read successively, digital literature can be explored in various ways. Reader agency expands the text's functional repertoire, allowing it to play a role consistent with a wide range of narrative trajectories.

Conclusion

Multimodal literature is the next level of literature that refers to literary works incorporating multiple communication modes beyond traditional printed text. These modes include visual, auditory, gestural, spatial, and linguistic elements. Analysing multimodal literature involves understanding how these modes interact to convey meaning, influence interpretation, and create a richer reading experience. These can include text, images, sound, typography, colour, layout, gestures, and more, which aims to understand how each mode contributes to the overall message and experience. It also investigates how different modes and mediums interact with each other and how it influences the readers/audience. Combining text, visuals, and other elements enhances or complicates the narrative's meaning, shaping the reader's interpretation and engagement with the work. The exploration of semiotic choices made within each mode, like how symbols, signs, and conventions within the modes convey meaning, are examined. Analysing multimodal literature within traditional 'print-centric' literary studies integrates elements of literature, visual arts, design, communication studies, and semiotics. It allows for a deeper understanding of how contemporary literature incorporates diverse modes of communication to create a more immersive and engaging reading experience.

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