



**CINEMATIC ‘HOWLING’ AND ‘SOBBING’ IN RICHARD
FLANAGAN’S FILM
‘THE SOUND OF ONE HAND CLAPPING’**

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DOI - 10.5281/zenodo.7734329

Abstract:

As we distinguish the works of literature have been adapted and modified for movie from the dawn of the industry. Since the beginning of cinema, adaptations have been becoming staple of the business for film. Since 1900, we find number of literary novels, stories, plays adapted to re-create movies. Even some of the filmmakers turned towards literature for the adaptations of movies. They believed that dependence on literary works will hoist the status of the film. Up until 20th century literature and film become interdependent areas, where many writers adequately initiated to write for film. Some of the novels are written not just as novels but as future films. Even we have identified society and literature have intact relations and that have been reflected through art and literature in society. The 100390 films visually depict the social reality. In the modern era the films are prepared on novel, drama, and stories. Hence, the new drifts of thoughts are so powerfully conveyed through the films. Nowadays ‘Literature on screen’ is associated with film adaptations studies. These days a book and film that are receiving widespread attention in both literary and film studies. In modern era so many technical, economic terms made the ‘film industry’ more apparent and effective. It has become a vehicle for exploring life as it was or life as it might be. In the pioneering years, making a film of novel requires an interest, brevity of work and comprehensive ambition. In modern era the novels such as ‘Great Expectations’ (1861), Jane Eyre (1847), The French Lieutenant Women (1969) these Victorian novels adapted into films by number of film directors. Therefore, in world cinema there is tradition of development of cinema. Yet what is inimitable and unique about ‘Australian Cinema’ is shown in this paper. Over the last twenty years Australian Cinema got international introduction. In the ‘National Identity’ formation Australian cinema played a vital role. It is possible to identify a range of Australian filmmaker’s national, global identity. From Mavius Sestier to Norman Dawn to Cate Blanchett contribute to the making of cinema. The Australian film makers quoted their identity. As according to George Millers views quoted in White –

“We are Australians, we are Australians film makers. I think without even trying the Australian comes through in the film”. (1984: 96)¹ The most prominent films such as ‘Walkabout (1970), Wake in Fright (1971) and Ned Kelly (1970), we can admire them in contemporary cinema. Typically, Australian cinema has been shaped and understood

topographically. The Australian film has diverse genres such as action adventures, the war film, social realism, horror and suspense, sexuality are analysed in new Australian feature cinema. Simultaneously the bush, fear of isolation, the aborigines, the consciousness of nationhood in war so conspicuously dealt in the movies. In the contemporary Australian cinema and other various films brought to front the Australian identity. The films such as The story of Kelly Gang (1906), The kid stakes (1927) are the best but lost films. Some films depict 'colonial past' in significant manner. The experience of colonisation, indigenous clashes with setter, so ideologically shown in films. Correspondingly, Richards Flanagan as a novelist, film director made a memorable contribution to Australian cinema. He is Tasmanian award-winning novelists, directed the film 'The Sound of One Hand Clapping' into cinematic representation. This popular film entered the 48th Berlin international film festival. This film was shot in Hobart, Tasmania. The present film got or nominated for ARIA music award of 1998.

Key Words: *Cinematic Howling, Sobbing, dysfunctional families, Post war, Multiculturalism, HEC Dam, Immigration, Culture.*

Introduction:

Richard Flanagan Originally wrote the novel 'The Sound of one Hand clapping (1998) for the screenplay but he didn't receive financial aid. He then adapted it into a novel. Later on, the novel attracted the attention of producer Rolf De Heer' for direction. The present movie got more popularity after the Australian film. The film was casted as 'Kerry' as Sonja Buloh, Kristof Kaczmerk' as 'Bojan Buloh', Rosie Flanagan as 'Sonja', Jacek Koman as 'Picotti', Essie Davis as 'Jean'.

The present film visualised the immigrant workers plight in Tasmania. The immigrant people came to Tasmania to have better future and life but in Australia where they were dehumanised. Their 'Personal Identity' was fractured. The Sonja visits her father Bojan in Tasmania after 20 years absence. She left him when he beat her up in a drunken rage and she finds him a sad alcoholic. That

brings the memories of their life in Australia. The film here focusses on refugees' who were suffered life in Tasmania. Continued flashbacks illuminate the movie, where Maria, Bojan were the migrants from 'Slovenia' and they suffered during the Nazi domination and terrible war. Bojan, who along with many migrants found job in Tasmanian HEC company, which is a forced work to 'Wog reffos'. The film even explores the 'Sonja' whose life in Sydney is unexplored – seems hardly happier than her father.

The novel contains post-colonial films elements such as 'colonial past history' etc. but at present the paper only focuses on cinematic representation of 'Howling and Sobbing' in the film. The sound of 'Howling and Sobbing' so creatively used. In the present movie some heart-warming moments during the film create the situations of violent 'howling' and 'Sobbing' in the movie. The terms

‘Howling’ is defined as ‘intense crying with sadness. The ‘Merriam’s Webster Dictionary’ defines it as producing or marked by a sound resembling a howl or a howling wilderness. Similarly, the sound ‘Sobbing’ is defined as to cry or weep with convulsive catching of the breath. Looking at the dictionary definitions. The features Howling and Sobbing too spectacularly used by Richard Flanagan in the movie ‘The Sound of One Hand Clapping’. In the movie the systematic discrimination is employed. The women are mostly projected as ‘odd job girls’, workers, sex objects in the movie. They were ignored by the patriarchal society. The women mostly Slovenian migrant labours faced many immigrant problems in Tasmania. The ‘Howling’ is used as multitude for gender issue. The ‘Subaltern’ people became the victim of such ‘Howling’ and ‘Sobbing’ in the movie. Here the subaltern people are Slovenian labourers. The Hydroelectricity work made them deprived and nationless homeless, people. The said work brought trauma in their life. Thus, according to Film critic Elsaesser in his text ‘postmodernism as mourning work’ ‘Trauma theory is not so much a theory of recovered memory as it is one of the recovered referentiality’ (2001:201). Hence the as per the viewpoint the present movie is form of memory of deprived people.



Fig 1: Maria leaves the home and daughter Sonja traumatically alone.

At the beginning of the movie, the views witnessed that mom is weeping and packing a cord and noose in her bag and strategies out into the snow, stricken faced and we views know no good will come out of this. The girl ‘Sonja’ daughter of Slovenian migrants in Tasmania, its stuck with Dad, who drinks too much, smokes even more and his kind of screw you attitude that won’t make him management material. Even the movie picturises a decade later, Sonya is pregnant and wondering looking at what happened to mom. She returns and looks up dad, but he is still drinking and smoking and snarling. The movie makes one to realise will she reconcile with Dad? Will she realise that life goes on and that every birth is another chance at redemption? This is one of those movies in which every character in it seems on the verge of the ‘big weep’ which supplies certain number of tensions. The Sonya is ‘Kerry Fox’ giving finally nuanced impression. The key figure in the film is ‘Kristof Kaczmarek’ as a father seems genuinely haunted and terrific presence. Sonya in the movie is abandoned when she was only three. She left home at

16 to escape an unhappy home life. The movie is shifting from past to present. The movie at various scenes shows the scenes of 'howling' and 'sobbing' at many times. The crying reveals the reality of Slovenian migrant and their personal tragedy and sadness. The Sonya's father was haunted by memories of his Nazi-occupied homeland and tragedy of his wife. The flashbacks are so absorbing that we feel cheated to return to the present day.

The sound of 'howling' and 'sobbing' depicts the mentality of migrant labours. That was not a physical sound but was an 'imagined sound'(Anderson). The tonalities of the 'sound' of screaming, howling created the 'Island of Tasmania' in this novel as well as in movie. The 'screaming' in the movie conveys something a memory of loss. At the beginning of movie, the setting of Tasmania depicts the 'Gothic wilderness' and its 'soundscape' of various tonalities. At the beginning the 'crying' of 'Maria Buloh' reveals her fractured identity in Tasmania and tells her daughter as she is leaving the home telling 'forget me Sonya' (Time 2:34). Later on the crying of various works on the HEC dam is so powerfully presented in the movie. The speech of Australian national minister and leader Peter Hay opens his speech telling the Australian values of citizenship and that made the 'Bojan Buloh' cry with his daughter (Time 5:00). Even when 'Sonya' came back to Tasmania to meet her father,

she was 19 and when she met the HEC Dam she cried at the Dam. The Dam created her memories of past, that she can't forget.

The loss of identity made the Bojan Buloh to forget everything and hence he began drinking heavily and hit many times to Sonja out of anger. When Sonja became pregnant, she was thinking abortion, even in Tasmania she feels isolated and alienated. Her past flashbacks made her to cry and sobbing. The psychological trauma which they have experienced during their stay in Tasmania made them howl and sadden. The English domination made the Slovenian people to forget their indigenous identity. The Bojan says in movie 'English is good for money' reveals their English domination. The traumatic experiences made the Sonja's 'cry' though her 'Aunt' telling 'sometimes abortion is not good for life, but for children it is good'. It means Slovenian migrants are in critical situation in Australia. Their internal communication was disturbed. Even the impact of modernization is shown in this movie. The social, political, and cultural aspects made impact on their lives. Sometimes the movie depicts Australian culture through filmy presentation. The culture of Picotti family, their services deal with Tasmania land. The following picture shows the incident that Sonja is willing to have abort that time she was convinced by her partner Evelyn Krape that aborting is not good. Even when she is giving birth to child, she

remembered her own past and her mother Maria, her leaving the room, her sexual abduction by Nazi soldiers. The following picture visualises the ‘howling’ of millions of Slovenian migrant labours. Their future is dark and murky in Tasmania that is what shown through the film.



Fig 2: The incident Evelyn giving mental support to Sonja.

Bojan Buloh pathetically says to Sonja they have ‘no home’ in Tasmania. The feeling of ‘alienation’ and ‘isolation’ so tragically depicted in this movie. Sonja’s mother always says, ‘Their life is upside down’ and they are not in Slovenia, but they are in Tasmania, where they are feeling suffocated and hyperventilated. Sometimes out of anger Sonja broke the glass of wardrobe and beat to her father out of sadness. The memories of her family made her distorted in life. Bojan told to Sonja how her mother raped by Nazi military. These family traumas affected on the life of Sonja. Hence, she cried and sobbed with her father. The Lullaby songs still echoed in the mind of Sonja. The emotional scene at the end of the movie is that Bojan brought to Sonja some utensils to her baby. Even his ‘Howling’ made Sonja to wake up from

the sleep. She still remembers the words of mother, ‘forget me Sonja’, and her ‘howling’ and ‘sobbing’ during the birth time (1:18). This scene memorises once to know the plight of Slovenian labours. The ultimate section of the movie by ‘hanging’ at the end made the Bojan Buloh more crying. The English civilisation, new vision of Australia made the Slovenian migrant to forget their self. The death of Sonja giving a birth to new-born baby made Bojan go to back past and reflect over his life. Even the death of Maria glorifies the female suicide through association of heroism and mystique.

This film has the powerful setting which tells the personal tragedy of father and daughter. Sonja Buloh barely remembers the night even after her 35 years ago when her mother Maria walked out of the door at the ‘Butler Gorge’ station. The mystery of ‘migrant people’ and history of ‘mainland Australia’ echoes the ‘reffos’ from a Slovenia ravaged by World War II. Even the movie flashes the Bojan’s poverty and wartime atrocities. Regarding the overall production and serialisation ‘Richard Flanagan’ tells in interview “I suppose I am writer by trade but filmmaker by misadventure. I really came to film through a series of accidents, through luck and through generosity of number of people I met along the way”. Hopefully Flanagan tells the movie is prepared with many disasters and problems. The Australian

‘multiculturalism’ so typically serialised in the movie. The Tasmanian history so uniquely measured in the movie. The following ultimate scene depicts that Sonja finally came to see the Dam where her father, many migrants lost their lives. She embraced and hugged tightly the dam and cried a lot looking at the dam. She could not cover her sentiments. Her deep sadness made her to look back the history of her dysfunctional family. This powerful tale tells the father and daughter struggle in the ‘unknown country of the heart’. Desperately she only can understand the suffering of migrant people.



Fig 3: Sonja holds the Dam wall where she had, had in-depth memories.

‘The Sound of One Hand Clapping’ (1996) is a sweeping movie about world war, migration, and search for new beginning in new land. The HEC project from Tasmanian highlands shaped the life of numerous migrant people. The movie depicts the ‘barbarism’ of government and their harshness to new labours depicts their contemporary life. The film critic David Stratton said, ‘a present demands to be seen ...powerful stuff’. The traumatic scenes from the beginning Sonja at the age of 3(Arbela Wain) smashing porcelain set, same

happened at the age of 8 by Rosie Flanagan till the end of movie. The whole movie is about Sonja and her father, but it did not fully explain enigma and anguish of Bojan. The end of Maria by hanging broke the heart of many viewers.

In this movie the ‘genre’ is established after the fact of viewing. The present movie is an example of ‘filmic multivalency’. Strategically the movie depicts with “Every screen moment is caught up in a multidimensional boom in which several elements foreground, shot scale, lightning, editing music are woven together into a multidimensionality reversible fabric” the ‘howling’ is used as ‘gender issue’, the female sex deals with great diversity of sexual orientations. The present movie discovers the sad cycle of violence that has been perpetuated since the family emigration from Slovenia after World War II. In this case the Los Angeles Times Book reviews it as ‘Heart wrenching and beautifully written.... A rare and remarkable achievement ... Flanagan blends a strong yet delicate psychological sensibility with ... sharp, vivid, original prose”.

Conclusion:

The ‘Howling, sobbing’ in the ‘Sound of One Hand Clapping’(1997) expresses profound sadness and loss of immigrant Slovenian people. The ‘songs’ which were refrained in the movie deals with roots of Eurocentric viewpoint. The

movie represents the colonial fantasies and extreme colonial reality. The ‘Sound’ which is used in the movie is typically ‘Geo-imaginary’ sound of Tasmanian Island. The imagined ‘sound’ emphasises, loss, suffering, death of many people who died by ‘screaming’. The ‘sobbing emotions’ so powerfully caught in the movie and repeated over and over as ‘terrible Laments’. The extreme distress is conveyed by the loss of songs, screams and howling. The movie encompasses the whole spectrum of sonic tonalities, their singing, howling is soul, memory of Tasmanian Island. The ‘scream’ allows the past Island and its history. The crying of Sonja ,Bojan ,Maria has symbolic significance and their sobbing represents the cry for security of millions of people .The many migrant people were insecure, anxious in Tasmania and that has been found in the sobbing of many characters.Ultimately the movie signifies the ‘sound’ of marginalised people who are having nothing to live ,hence ironically ‘one hand’ signifies here migrant people who has one hand and not able to clap by two hands .Their one hand was fractured by Tasmanian government and political coercion.

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