



Literary Studies

Transformation of *The Giver* Novel into Film by Phillip Noyce

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A B S T R A C T

There are numerous ways to adapt a literary work. One of them is adapting literary work from the novel into the film. This article is about Lois Lowry's novel *The Giver*, which was adapted into a film with the same title by Phillip Noyce. During the adaptation process, transformations in the intrinsic elements were discovered. This transformation can occur due to differences in media, which was originally in the form of text (novel) to audiovisual (film). This article aims to discover the transformations that occurred during adaptation as well as the motive of the adapter. Several steps were taken to accomplish this goal. The first step is to classify the discovered differences into tables. The transformations are then analyzed in the second step to determine the visible ideology. Third, the adapter's motives can be identified using the ideology that has been discovered. The theory of adaptation and mythology is the one employed in this article. In order to identify ideology, the mythology theory is used to analyze differences. Afterward, using the identified ideology, the adapter's motives are discovered using the adaptation theory. The final result of the adaptation of *The Giver* novel depicted several ideologies including totalitarianism, liberalism, and freedom. The visible motives are personal and political motives and economic lures.

I. INTRODUCTION

Lois Lowry's novel *The Giver* has sold over 10 million copies worldwide. It is a 1993 American dystopian novel. The narrative unfolds in a seemingly utopian society that gradually unveils its true dystopian reality as the plot develops. Johar (2014: 2) argued that dystopia refers to a government that establishes laws that require individuals to exist under uniform circumstances. Much like in 'The Giver', The Elders hold dominion over and exercise authority over the lives of all individuals within the Community. In this realm, love, war, classes, and envy are absent, replaced by a pervasive uniformity. The elders wield comprehensive control, shaping all aspects of life, and all citizens of the Community are obligated to adhere to the mandates established by The Elders.

Phillip Noyce adapted this novel into a film with the same title in 2014. According to Hutcheon (2006: 32-58), there are three modes of engagement in the adaptation of a literary work: telling to showing; showing to showing; and interacting to telling/showing. As a result, not only novels or films are used for adaptation, but also comic books, theatrical shows, video games, and other forms of media.

According to Klarer (2004: 53), the film being a semi-textual genre is both affected and impacted by literature and literary critics. It is formed by literary techniques and, in turn, has influenced literary practices. Twentieth-century theatrical forms have evolved in parallel with film, exceeding realistic dramatic performances through advanced photographic depictions. Films hold a significant position as a valuable artistic medium, a source of popular entertainment, and a potent tool for enlightening the public. Certain films also explore topics such as technology, animals, the future, and more.

The transition from text-based (novel) to audiovisual (film) media resulted in several changes in the intrinsic element. Hutcheon (2006: 7) explained that adaptation is a repetition of work but does not include all of the elements of the original work. In light of this, when an adapter adapts a literary work, changes might occur. Hutcheon (2006: 86-95) also stated that the process of adaptation has four motives: economic lures (when the adapter wants an economic benefit from the work); legal constraints (adapters must make changes to their adaptation works in order to be free of the applicable law rules); cultural capital (when the adapter wants to benefit from an existing cultural phenomenon); personal and political motives (adapters must have their personal reasons and take their position in the adaptation work, adaptation have also been used to express the political views).

In addition to Hutcheon's adaptation theory, Roland Barthes' mythology theory is required in order to uncover ideology in adaptation. According to Barthes (1957: 107), although myth has formal boundaries, there are no 'substantial' boundaries, and the character of myth is determined by how it conveys a message without specifying what that message is intended to achieve. Myth fulfills an ideological role by embodying a certain level of power and authority. The interplay between the hierarchical arrangement of meanings, encompassing denotation and connotation, culminates in the creation of an ideology that has been subsequently labeled as the third order of signification (Amri and Pratiwi, 2023: 23).

In conducting a research as the base of this article, it is important to know the previous studies since they can be a reference. According to Hysong (2014), previous studies refer to reports or research findings that have been published and disseminated in the past. The writers discovered several previous research that also made use of Hutcheon's adaptation theory: Sandika (2020) *Medium Specificities of The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde by Robert Louis Stevenson: Marvel Comic, Video Game, and Korean TV Drama*; Rahmah and Iman (2022) *Cinematizing the Victorian Novel to Cinema "Pride and Prejudice"*; Rini (2019) *The Adaptation of Alice Through the Looking Glass Novel by Lewis Carol into Film by Tim Burton*; Soleha (2020) *The Adaptation of Crazy Rich Asians Novel by Kevin Kwan into Film by Jon M. Chu*; Adawiyah (2019) *The Adaptation of Perrault's Sleeping Beauty Novel in the Wood Fairy Tale into Two Disney's Film: Sleeping Beauty and Maleficent*. Through understanding the previous research, the writers was able to identify the differences between the studies that have been conducted by previous researchers and the research that the writers currently conducting. The main difference lies in the object that is the focus of each study.

There are two questions that underlie this research: how is the transformation from the novel to the film and what are the motives beyond the adaptation of *The Giver*. The purpose of this research is to find out the differences that occur and to discover the adapter's motive. The selection of this particular topic was made based on the writers' intention to conduct a comprehensive analysis of director Noyce's adaptation of the novel *The Giver*. Central to this research is the analysis of Noyce's decision to allocate a more substantial role to a specific character within the narrative framework. This transformation not only introduces film conflict that enriches the storyline but also contributes to the overall stability and cohesiveness of the plot's progression. In addition, this research is also intended as additional information for English learners who are interested in this topic. The writers hope that the result of this research will be beneficial to other researchers and can be used as a reference for future studies.

II. METHOD

This research is qualitative research because the data presented is not in the form of numerical data. As explained by Blaxter (2006: 64) qualitative research is concerned with collecting and analyzing as much data as possible without the use of numerical data. The data were taken from the novel *The Giver* (1993) and the film 'The Giver' (2014) in the form of written dan verbal words.

According to Given (2008: 396), data sources can be primary (such as paintings, media, music, and documents) and secondary (such as literature of the era, stories, and other accounts of the event or phenomenon. There are two data sources, primary data, and secondary data. The primary data is conducted by highlighting any texts in the novel which undergo alteration in the film. The secondary data are taken from journals, books, articles, and websites that can support this topic. The data will be

categorized in the table based on intrinsic elements. In addition to using visuals, figures, or tables to support their discussion, a lot of qualitative researchers do so. Case studies and ethnographies convey descriptive data about every participant in a table. In grounded theory, they present a process model. In ethnography, they advance a drawing of the particular research site (Creswell, 2008: 189).

After the data is organized, we will contrast and analyze the data between the novel and the film to find the differences. The next step is analyzing the transformations in *The Giver* novel and film adaptation involves employing Roland Barthes' mythology theory to uncover the meaning of signs and reveal the constructed ideology. Additionally, Hutcheon's theory of adaptation is utilized to discover the motives behind the novel-to-film adaptation, using the previously identified ideologies to shed light on the specific interests driving the creation of the film.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the data that has been collected and analyzed, there are differences that occur in the characterization and plot of the intrinsic elements. Characterization involves the author's deliberate endeavor to depict and unfold the nature of the story's characters. Its purpose is to construct and advance the development of these characters within the narrative. This process of characterization encompasses the characters' attitudes, aspirations, emotions, interests, and ethical beliefs. Moreover, it conveys the realization and progression of these characters throughout the course of the story (Fitria, 2021: 6). As stated by Kennedy and Gioia (1995: 10), the plot of a story can be described as the organization of events that stem from a conflict. The term "plot" carries diverse interpretations, similar to various other literary concepts. Occasionally, it simply signifies the sequence of events occurring within a story.

The Changes of Characterization

Asher

The first visible difference is Asher's character. In the novel, Asher is told to have a cheerful, humorous, and funny personality. It can be seen from the quotation in the novel.

"... His corrections and apologies are very prompt. And his good humor is unfailing." The audience murmured in agreement. Asher's cheerful disposition was well-known throughout the community. (Page 55)

But in the film, Asher is described as a serious personality, impassive, and busybody. This can be seen in the scene (29:11) when Jonas tries to share his memories with Asher and Fiona. Fiona gladly accepted Jonas' invitation, but Asher refused, claiming that what they were doing violated community rules and chose to leave them.

Asher's rejection of Jonas' invitation in the scene (29:11) shows that he adheres to the rules of the Community. In the scene (01:13:19), the Chief Elder takes advantage of Asher's obedience to thwart Jonas' plan. Chief Elder directed Asher to find and kill Jonas. This scene was made possible by the different assignments that Asher was given. In the novel, Asher is tasked with being the Assistant Director of Recreation, whereas in the film, his assignment shifts to that of a Drone Pilot (scene 09:40). It can be seen in the quotation from the novel: "'We have given you the Assignment of Assistant Director of Recreation.'" (Lowry, 1993: 56).

Asher's dedication to always obey the rules and the Chief Elder's instruction become a signifier of totalitarianism. Borowski (2017: 81) defines totalitarianism as a governing system that aims to control all individuals, viewing itself as the embodiment of an all-encompassing force governing reality, and possessing legal authority to suppress opposition in punishing lawbreakers or those who disobey their leader's order. Asher's conformity to this system exemplifies the fear-driven necessity of obeying rules and the Chief Elder's commands to avoid the dire consequences of "release."

The Chief Elder

The next difference is seen in the character of the Chief Elder. Although only mentioned 25 times in the novel, the figure of the Chief Elder is described as a friendly, wise, and kind leader.

“For example,” she said, smiling, “we did not consider for an instant designating Asher and Instructor of Threes.” The audience howled with laughter. Asher laughed, too, looking sheepish but pleased at the special attention. (Page 54)

Chief Elder, on the other hand, plays a bigger role in the film. With more responsibilities, the Chief Elder is also described as a leader who is selfish, ignorant, and afraid of pain and failure. This can be seen in the scene (01:06:02), where the Chief Elder directs the security officer to look for Jonas and apprehend him.

The Chief Elder and the Giver are seen arguing in the scene (01:23:08). The Chief Elder is deeply regretted that Jonas and the Giver want to bring back all of the pain and sorrow from the past. The giver replied that he believed everything would be better if she could accept love because love can bring faith and hope. However, the Chief Elder refused that love is just a passion that can lead to contempt and murder. She continued by saying that humans are weak and selfish and that if given the freedom to choose, they always choose the wrong one.

According to Friedrich (1968: 54), totalitarianism refers to a system wherein a centralized elite or movement employs sophisticated and technologically advanced political tools to orchestrate a comprehensive social revolution. This revolution involves the conditioning of humans based on specific arbitrary ideological beliefs propagated by the leadership – a consensus forcibly imposed upon the entire population.

The actions of the Chief Elder, her imposition of rules, and control over the community can be a sign of totalitarianism. According to Grunenberg (2001: 733), totalitarianism is a type of total dominance, manifested through anti-democratic movements integrated into the government system, controlling institutions and private lives. The Chief Elder mirrors this, erasing memories of the past and dictating every aspect of life, including language, family members, assignments, and controlling desire and lust through injections. In this community, there is no freedom to choose; everyone must comply with the Chief Elder’s directives, resulting in a society devoid of love, war, classes, and envy.

Jonas

Jonas is the last character distinction. The novel’s main characters, Jonas, Asher, and Fiona, are all 12 years old. The ceremonies conducted in the community indicate this. The Ceremony of Twelve is the name given to this ceremony in the novel. As for The Ceremony of the Grown, it is explained in the film. Jonas’ attitude was also impacted by the age gap that existed. In the novel, Jonas requires the Giver’s assistance in making his decision.

“That’s true. And having you here with me over the past year has made me realize that things must change. For years I’ve felt that they should, but it seemed so hopeless.”

“Now for the first time I think there might be a way,” The Giver said slowly.

“Yes,” he told The Giver. “I’ll do it. I think I can do it. I’ll try, anyway. But I want you to come with me.”

“So if you escape, once you are gone – and, Jonas, you know that you can never return –” (Page 155)

However, in the film, Jonas does not require the Giver’s assistance in making his decision. This can be seen in the scene (01:03:31), where Jonas tells the Giver firmly that he is ready to go to Elsewhere despite the Giver’s prohibition.

This scene highlights the evident necessity for encouragement or motivation in influencing the decisions of Jonas, the 12-year-old protagonist in the book. In contrast, Jonas, depicted as approximately 17 to 18 years old, exhibits unwavering decision-making in the film without external explanation or encouragement from the Giver. This demonstrates how submissive Jonas is in the novel and how closely he adheres to the Giver’s directions. Meanwhile, in the film, Jonas is seen to be more capable of making decisions about what he wants to do and he can be able to be responsible for his choice.

Jonas’ defiance of the Giver and his determination to make his own choices is a sign of liberalism. Liberalism emphasizes the right of individuals to make their own decisions, as described by Harrison and Boyd (2018: 202). Jonas’ actions demonstrate his capacity to decide what is best for himself, even if it means fleeing to Elsewhere against the Giver’s opposition. Liberal ideas promote equality as the basis

of justice, advocating that every individual has the ability to discern what is best for them (Harrison and Boyd, 2018: 202).

The data presented above has been organized in the table below for ease of reading.

Theme	Characterization in the Novel	Characterization in the Film
Asher	Cheerful, humorous, funny person, someone with a fast way of speaking	Serious personality, impassive, busybody
Chief Elder	Friendly, wise, and kind	Selfish, ignorant, afraid of pain and failure
Jonas	Jonas needs encouragement or motivation to make his decision	Jonas makes self-assured decisions without any encouragement

Table 1. The difference in characterization

The Changes of Plot

The Last Memory

This scene is not described in the novel. This scene occurs when Jonas decided to go to Elsewhere. The Giver gave Jonas this memory in hopes that it would become Jonas' strength and courage. The last memory scene depicts war, resistance, and freedom. Scene (01:04:22) depicts a number of events including the student-led protest motivated by demands for the resignation of leaders of the Chinese Communist Party that took place in Tiananmen Square, Beijing (1989); Egyptian people's protests intended to bring down President Hosni Mubarak in Tahrir Square, Cairo (2011); the protest against the rape and murder of Jyoti Singh in New Delhi (2012); and the last is the figure of Nelson Mandela, the first black president of South Africa and known for his role in leading the resistance and liberating South Africa from the apartheid policy.

The adapter aims to emphasize that acts of human oppression and restraint run counter to the essence of humanity. This message is communicated in the film by incorporating scenes of protests and resistance. By leveraging the themes of oppression, shackles, and restraint, the adapter intends to highlight their detrimental impact on humanity. Consequently, the Last Memory transmitted from Giver to Jonas portrays values such as resistance, strength, bravery, and freedom. These elements become signifiers of liberalism, which prioritize individual freedom and reject restrictions from government or religion in various aspects of society, such as politics, economy, science, and culture. Harrison and Boyd (2018: 202) assert that liberals believe in a society built on self-interested morality, mutual support, and respect. This enlightened self-interest leads to a balance of interests, institutions, and political power, effectively managing both tyranny and chaos.

Arrest and Punishment for Fiona

The novel does not provide any explanation for this scene. This scene might occur due to the divergent roles assigned to Fiona. While in the novel, Fiona is designated as the Caretaker of the Old, her role shifts to that of a Nurturer in the film. Moreover, this scene's occurrence could also be attributed to the evolving relationship between Jonas and Fiona. In the film, their relationship is depicted as notably stronger, in contrast to the novel, where they are portrayed as mere acquaintances working at the same volunteer site.

Fiona's arrest scene (01:08:37) takes place when she assists Jonas in looking for Gabe at the Nurturing Center. To get Jonas away from the security officers, she tricked them. Fiona ran while carrying a baby box. However, Fiona was nonetheless apprehended by security officers. For her actions, Fiona is being punished.

Fiona is locked up in a cubicle in the scene (01:18:07) as she waits for her "release." When Jonas' mother approached her, Fiona mentioned that she felt something. She felt that something was missing

from her, more specifically, it is stolen. Fiona described “something” that has been taken from her as being warm and comfortable, but she did not know what it was. She said that Jonas knew that. Fiona continued to claim that she felt something.

What Fiona said to Jonas’ mother reveals that she has been deprived of freedom. Freedom, defined as the ability and opportunity to choose, is absent from her life due to the Chief Elder’s prescribed way of living. Veenhoven (2014: 2356) identifies opportunity” and “ability” as essential conditions for freedom. Fiona lacks both of them, being forced to follow the rules set by the Chief Elder, illustrating the impact of totalitarianism. Totalitarian rule eradicates any space for freedom between individuals, leaving no room for personal choice or autonomy (Werang, 2017: 36).

Relationship between Jonas and Fiona

Although it is stated in the novel that Jonas and Fiona are friends, their relationship is not clearly described. However, in the film, Jonas expresses romantic interest in Fiona. They appear to be much closer than they do in the novel. Jonas always thinks about Fiona all the time, even when he flees to Elsewhere. Jonas makes Fiona one of his motivations so he can succeed. Jonas desired Fiona to feel the same emotions as he did. In the scene (50:17), Jonas asks Fiona to skip her morning injection by picking her finger, dripping blood onto the apple, and then placing it over the sensor. At first, Fiona initially refuses, arguing that Jonas scared her and that using an apple to trick the sensor certainly does not work. Jonas counters that he has been doing this for a month and it always works every time. Finally, Fiona agreed and they made a promise to meet in the Triangle tomorrow after work.

Following that, at the scene (56:51), Jonas meets Fiona in the Triangle. Fiona told Jonas that when she wanted to scold him, she suddenly started thinking about him. Jonas took Fiona’s hand and asked if she felt anything. But Fiona replied that she had no words to describe it. Jonas asked Fiona again if it felt warm or nice. Jonas kissed Fiona after noticing her confusion. Fiona was perplexed and decided to leave Jonas in the Triangle.

Jonas’ attitude toward Fiona, where he expresses love and shares memories with her, is a sign of liberalism. In the film, both characters are portrayed as older than in the novel, granting them more freedom to choose and develop romantic feelings. Actor Thwaites stated that aging the characters enhances the love story, making it more plausible for young adults to experience intense romantic emotions compared to younger individuals experiencing mere crushes (Fallon, 2017). This approach aligns with liberal ideals of individual freedom and the ability to make personal choices.

The data presented above has been organized in the table below to make it easier to see the differences.

Theme	Plot in the Novel	Plot in the Film
Last Memory	Does not Exist	Last Memory about war, resistance, and freedom
Arrest and Punishment for Fiona	Does not Exist	Fiona feels that something was stolen from her, freedom
Relationship between Jonas and Fiona	The novel does not explain it clearly	Jonas expresses a romantic interest in Fiona. He wants Fiona to feel the same emotions as he did.

Table 2. The difference in plot

It depicts some ideologies that emerge from the data that has been classified. These ideologies are very useful for discovering the adapter’s motive. Based on the data and analysis presented above, it is evident that the adaptation of *The Giver* novel into the film has given rise to several prominent and discernible ideologies, among which we can identify totalitarianism, which signifies a form of autocratic control and

absolute authority; liberalism, which represents a belief in individual freedoms and civil liberties; and freedom, which encompasses the concept of emancipation and the right to self-determination.

The ideology from the data above shows personal and political motives. Phillip Noyce as an adapter tries to highlight the political elements of totalitarianism, liberalism, and freedom. A conflict is intended to be created in the film by expanding the Chief Elder's role. By changing the age of the characters and adding a love story, Noyce also changed the target audience he wanted to reach. Noyce's previous films, such as *Rabbit Proof Fence* (2002) and *Catch a Fire* (2006), which tell about oppressed people, made him present the figure of Nelson Mandela as a symbol of freedom. Furthermore, Noyce chose South Africa as the location of 'The Giver's filming and Nelson Mandela's figure is also a form of paying his tributes.

The Giver novel, which has sold over 10 million copies and received the prestigious Newberry Medal, received a film adaptation after a 20-year gap. However, despite the novel's immense success and popularity, the film only managed to generate around \$12 million at the box office and received unfavorable reviews from the audience. Consequently, the adapter did not profit from the film, indicating a failure in achieving the economic lure motive.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

It can be concluded from the previous chapter, that *The Giver* reveals various transformations in characterization, plot, and setting. The characters of Asher and the Chief Elder undergo significant changes, with Asher portrayed as serious in the film and the Chief Elder depicted as selfish and ignorant. Furthermore, the ages of the main characters are altered in the film, as they are described as older compared to their descriptions in the novel. The plot also sees transformations, such as the inclusion of a powerful last memory given by the Giver to Jonas, which serves as motivation. Additionally, scenes like Fiona's arrest are added to the film. The relationship between Jonas and Fiona is portrayed as more significant in the film compared to the novel.

After analyzing the transformations, it can be seen that several ideologies have emerged due to these transformations. These include totalitarianism, liberalism, and freedom. The adapter's motive can be recognized with the help of the underlying ideology. Based on the ideologies that have been discovered, the adapter's motives are personal and political motives and economic lures.

The way the adapter to show the audience the effects of these transformations makes it clear that a totalitarian system where people are tightly controlled and suppressed is not good and goes against human values. In a totalitarian system, citizens lack freedom because they must always follow the rules set by their leader. Breaking these rules results in severe punishment. This highlights how people under such control rarely experience true freedom.

Despite the fact that *The Giver* novel was a bestseller and sold millions of copies, the film adaptation did not meet expectations in terms of box office success and audience reception. As a result, the adapter does not profit from this film and fails on the economic lures motive. For readers interested in this subject, delving into a comparative analysis of the novel and the film is recommended, critically examining the changes made and reflecting on their impact to gain a deeper understanding of the artistic choices and creative liberties involved.

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