



From Darkness to Laughter: Tracing the Ecranisation Transformations of *Caging Skies* into *Jojo Rabbit*

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Info Artikel	ABSTRACT
Sejarah Artikel: Dikumpulkan: 3 Juni 2024 Direvisi: 5 Juni 2024 Diterima: 10 Juni 2024	<p>This study is an ecranisation study that aims to describe the adaptations of Christine Leunens' novel "Caging Skies" (2008) into Taika Waititi's film "Jojo Rabbit" (2019). It is a descriptive qualitative study that utilizes Eneste's theory of reduction, addition, and variation to analyze the changes found in the process of adapting the novel into the film. The primary data sources for this research are the text from the novel "Caging Skies" and scenes from the film "Jojo Rabbit". The findings reveal that there are numerous reductions, additions, and variations in the transformation process of the novel "Caging Skies" into the film "Jojo Rabbit". These changes include alterations in characters, scenes, names, locations, and even the genre itself. One significant change is the shift in genre, where Taika Waititi opts for a comedic approach in adapting the novel into his directed film, while Christine Leunens' original narrative is conveyed in a darker manner.</p> <p>Copyright © 2024 Geliga : Journal of Humanities and Social Science. All rights reserved.</p>

Kata Kunci:

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1. INTRODUCTION

In the modern era, there has been a proliferation of films adapted from novels. Several reasons contribute to this trend of transforming novels into films. Firstly, the source novel may be a bestseller, which garners significant attention and interest from readers. Secondly, the novel might possess an intriguing storyline, such as a compelling historical narrative, a captivating true story, or a controversial subject matter. These factors are expected to attract audiences to experience the transition from the textual form of the novel to the visual medium of film, thereby supporting the commercial aspect of filmmaking.

The process of transforming or adapting a novel into a film is known as "ecranisation." According to Eneste, ekranisation involves the transference or removal of elements from a novel to the screen, inevitably resulting in various changes. Thus, ekranisation can be described as a process of transformation. In this context, ekranisation comprises three types of changes: reduction, addition, and variation (Eneste, 1991, p. 8).

The phenomenon of ekranisation cannot be entirely separated from the original literary work. Successful novels are often starting points for successful film adaptations. The decision to adapt a novel into a film is driven by the potential for commercial success and the desire to bring the literary work to a wider audience through the visual medium of cinema.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Ecranisation

Ekranisation, the process of transferring or adapting a novel into a film, is a well-established concept in literary and film studies. As outlined by Eneste (1991), "ecranisation is a process of change" (Eneste, 1991, p. 8), as the transformation from a novel to the screen inevitably results in various changes, such as reduction, addition, and variation. Reduction involves the cutting or omission of elements from the literary work, such as "stories, plots, characters, settings, or atmospheric elements" (Eneste, 1991, p. 21). This process is often driven by considerations like irrelevance, technical limitations of film, or audience preferences.

Addition, on the other hand, refers to the introduction of new elements not present in the

original source material. This can include "additions to the story, plot, characterization, and setting" (Eneste, 1991, p. 9), as the screenwriter and director interpret and modify the original work. Eneste (1991) suggests that these additions can stem from the filmmakers' interpretations and can potentially enhance or alter the narrative.

Furthermore, ekranisation allows for variations to occur in the realm of "story ideas, storytelling styles, and other aspects" (Eneste, 1991, p. 9). As Hutcheon (2006) notes, "adaptation is a process of transition, change, and conversion from one medium to another" (p. 48), and variations can be influenced by factors such as the medium being used, the target audience, and the desired duration of the film. Eneste (1991) notes that filmmakers may intentionally introduce variations "so that the impression that films based on novels are not as original as their novels" (Eneste, 1991, p. 18).

While previous studies have applied Eneste's ekranisation theory to various literary works and their film adaptations, this research offers a unique perspective by focusing on the transformation of Christine Leunens' novel "Caging Skies" (Leunens, 2008) into Taika Waititi's film "Jojo Rabbit" (Waititi, 2019). Unlike many ekranisation studies that examine adaptations of popular or mainstream novels, this research delves into the adaptation of a lesser-known, psychologically intense novel set during World War II.

By analyzing the reductions, additions, and variations that occurred during the adaptation process, this study aims to uncover the creative and pragmatic considerations that guided the filmmakers. Additionally, it seeks to explore the potential impact of these changes on the thematic and narrative elements of the original work, offering insights into the intricate process of translating literary narratives into cinematic experiences, as Linda notes, "when the transition process happens between two mediums, changes are unavoidable" (Hutcheon, 2006, p. 48).

Moreover, this research will investigate the underlying motivations and implications of the changes made during the adaptation, considering factors such as ideological, cultural, and commercial influences. This multifaceted approach promises to shed light on the complex interplay between artistic expression, audience expectations,

and market forces that shape the ecranisation process.

Ultimately, by examining the ecranisation of "Caging Skies" into "Jojo Rabbit," this study aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of the adaptation process and its potential to reinterpret and reframe literary works for contemporary audiences, particularly when dealing with unconventional source materials.

2.2 Popular Culture

The concept of popular culture is highly relevant to the study of novel-to-film adaptations, as these adaptations are often considered products of popular culture. As John Storey (2019) explains, popular culture refers to "the traditions and material culture of a particular society" (Storey, 2019, p. 5), encompassing cultural products such as films, literature, music, art, and food.

Storey (2019) outlines six definitions of popular culture, including a culture that is widely well-liked, a culture distinct from "high culture," a commercial cultural product produced for mass consumption, an authentic culture created by the people as opposed to commercial enterprises, a culture negotiated between the dominant and subordinate classes, and a culture that blurs the distinction between "original" and "commercial" (Storey, 2019, pp. 5-8).

In the context of this research, the adaptation of Christine Leunens' novel "Caging Skies" into Taika Waititi's film "Jojo Rabbit" can be considered a product of popular culture, aligning with Storey's definitions. As a film adaptation of a literary work, it represents a commercial cultural product aimed at mass audiences, while also potentially blurring the lines between original and commercial art forms.

Moreover, the adaptation process itself can be seen as a negotiation between the dominant cultural industries (filmmakers, production companies) and the subordinate cultural elements (the original literary work and its author). By analyzing this adaptation, this study aims to shed light on how popular culture products are shaped by various sociocultural forces and how they may, in turn, influence and reflect the values and beliefs of a particular society.

2.3 Ideology

Ideology is a crucial concept in the study of popular culture, as it encompasses the systems of ideas, beliefs, and values that underlie and shape

cultural products. As outlined by Storey (2019), ideology can have multiple meanings and definitions in the context of cultural analysis.

One definition of ideology, as proposed by Storey (2019), refers to "a systematic body of ideas articulated by a particular group of people" (Storey, 2019, p. 3). This can include ideologies associated with political parties, professions, or social movements. In the context of this research, it is essential to consider the potential ideologies embedded within the novel "Caging Skies" and the film "Jojo Rabbit," as they may reflect the worldviews and beliefs of their respective creators and the sociocultural contexts in which they were produced.

Another definition highlighted by Storey (2019) suggests that ideology can involve "a distortion, or concealment" (Storey, 2019, p. 3) of reality, serving the interests of powerful groups over marginalized ones. This definition raises questions about how the adaptation process may have altered or obscured certain ideological elements present in the original novel, and whether such changes were motivated by specific ideological agendas or commercial considerations.

Furthermore, Storey (2019) notes that ideology can operate at the level of connotation, "the secondary often unconscious meanings that texts and practices carry, or can be made to carry" (Storey, 2019, p. 4). This perspective invites an examination of the subtle, underlying ideological messages conveyed through the novel and film, and how these messages may have been shaped or transformed during the adaptation process.

By exploring the ideological dimensions of the novel "Caging Skies" and its adaptation into "Jojo Rabbit," this research aims to uncover the ways in which popular culture products can both reflect and shape societal beliefs, values, and power structures. Through a critical analysis of the ideological elements at play, this study seeks to contribute to a deeper understanding of the complex interplay between art, ideology, and sociocultural contexts in the realm of popular culture.

3. METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative descriptive approach to analyze the transformation of Christine Leunens' novel "Caging Skies" (Leunens, 2008)

into Taika Waititi's film "Jojo Rabbit" (Waititi, 2019). Qualitative research is well-suited for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to social or human problems (Creswell, 2018). The descriptive nature of this study aligns with the goal of providing a detailed account of the ecranisation process, including the reductions, additions, and variations that occurred during the adaptation. The qualitative descriptive approach is particularly useful in international comparative studies, as it allows for an in-depth description of phenomena across different cultural and social contexts (Bayan V. Seixas, 2018)

The primary research instruments in this study are the novel "Caging Skies" and the film "Jojo Rabbit" themselves. Data collection will be conducted through careful observation and documentation techniques. Observation, a widely used method in qualitative research (Katz-Buonincontro, 2018), allows the researcher to closely examine the novel's text and the film's scenes and dialogues. Documentation, an extension of the observation method (Mahsun, 2012), will involve recording relevant data, such as quotes, descriptions, and visual elements, from the novel and film.

The data analysis process will follow the three steps outlined by Sugiyono (2008): data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. Data reduction will involve selecting and focusing on the most relevant information from the novel and film, related to the ecranisation process. Data display will involve organizing and presenting the reduced data in a structured manner, facilitating the drawing of conclusions. Conclusion drawing/verification will involve interpreting the data and addressing the research questions, supported by strong evidence from the data.

The analysis will be guided by Eneste's (1991) ecranisation theory, specifically examining instances of reduction, addition, and variation that occurred during the adaptation process. Reductions may include omissions or cuts to elements such as stories, plots, characters, settings, or atmospheric elements. Additions may involve introducing new elements not present in the original novel, such as changes to the story, plot, characterization, or setting. Variations may encompass changes in story

ideas, storytelling styles, or other aspects influenced by factors like the medium, audience, or desired duration.

By analyzing the data through the lens of Eneste's theory, this study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the ecranisation process and the motivations behind the changes made during the adaptation of "Caging Skies" into "Jojo Rabbit." The findings will contribute to the broader discourse on novel-to-film adaptations and the challenges and opportunities that arise when translating literary narratives into cinematic experiences.

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The analysis identified several variations, reductions, and additions that occurred in the adaptation of the novel "Caging Skies" to the film "Jojo Rabbit". These transformations were categorized according to Eneste's theory on the ecranization process.

4.1 Variation

a) Genre Change

While "Caging Skies" presented a dark, solemn narrative about Nazi history and ideology, "Jojo Rabbit" took a comedic approach, satirizing the Nazis' obsession with world domination and racial superiority. A key example is how Johannes/Jojo's injury was portrayed:

Novel: "During one air raid, I was running for cover...when a line of fire made my next choice of direction tricky...I wish I'd never looks at myself again. I'd lost part of the cheekbone under my left eye, could no longer move my left arm, either at the shoulder or elbow. And I'd lost the lower part of my forearm" (Leunens, 2008, pp. 48-49). Johannes suffers horrific injuries from an air raid bombing.

Film: In a comedic scene, Jojo poorly throws a grenade during training which rebounds and explodes near him, leaving him with only minor facial scarring and a limp.



Picture. 1 Jojo throwing the grenade incorrectly at 15:07



Picture. 2. close-ups of his scarred cheek at 16:34

This tonal shift from somber to comedic aligned with Waititi's renowned style as a filmmaker of satirical, irreverent humour.

b) Title Change

The novel's title "Caging Skies" was changed to "Jojo Rabbit" to reinforce the film's comedic tone. As overtly stated in the film, this new title refers to a derisive nickname given to the 10-year-old Jojo after his unsuccessful attempt to prove his masculinity by killing a rabbit during training.



Picture. 3 The original novel title "Caging Skies" and new film title "Jojo Rabbit"

c) Visualization of Johannes's Thoughts

In the novel, Johannes's internal thoughts, ideological struggles, and imaginary conversations are depicted through his narration only. However, the film manifests these abstract concepts physically by visualizing them through an imaginary friend depicted as Adolf Hitler, making Johannes/Jojo's inner conflicts more tangible.

Novel: "If ever we lost the war we could emigrate to America and I would marry her" (Leunens, 2008, p. 89) - An internal thought of Johannes's.

Film: Adolf Hitler appears to Jojo in various scenes, such as scolding him at 02:19 (Waititi, 2019) for being insufficient as a Nazi youth, making his indoctrinated thoughts and Nazi ideology overtly personified.



Picture. 4 The Adolf Hitler imaginary friend admonishing Jojo at 02:19

d) Setting Change

While the original novel was set in Vienna, Austria, a key Nazi power center, the film's setting was changed to Germany to provide a more authentic depiction of the Nazi regime's homeland. This is evidenced by the striking similarities between the architectural backdrop and infrastructure seen in the film's town and those of Nazi-era German cities.

Novel: "Our house...was in the sixteenth district, called Ottakring, on the western outskirts of Vienna." (Leunens, 2008, p. 12)

Film: The buildings, homes, and storefronts seen in Jojo's town closely resemble those of Nazi-era Germany during that period.

e) Character Name Changes

To bolster authenticity to the new German setting, the names of several key characters were changed to common Germanic names reflecting personality traits. Johannes's mother became Rosie (meaning "fame, bravery"), sister Ute became Inga ("powerful, peace"), and best friend Kippi became Yorki, a German breed of dog known for obedience.

f) Age Change

A crucial change was depicting the protagonist Johannes, renamed Jojo, as only 10 years old instead of aging from 10 to 19 as in the novel. This removed the novel's mature romantic and sexual storylines between Johannes and Elsa, reframing their relationship as a Childhood Crush rather than an adult obsession. This change likely aimed to make the film more family-friendly.

Novel: "I was seventeen by then...I admit with shame, I experienced premature climax" (Leunens, 2008, p. 77) - Depicting Johannes's sexuality.

Film: Jojo's feelings for Elsa are portrayed through childlike adoration, laughter, and embarrassment without overt sexual undertones.



Picture. 5 In a subtle scene at 00:44, Jojo is clearly stated to be 10 years old

4.2 Reduction

a) Opening

The novel's lengthy opening devoted to explaining Johannes's family history, backstories of grandparents, death of his siblings, and ultimate joining of the Hitler Youth was omitted. Instead, the film opens abruptly with Jojo at age 10, introducing himself before joining the Jungvolk youth group.

Opening novel quote describing Johannes's family members on p. 9-12:

"I was as close to my grandparents as close to my parents" p9

"We called my grandfather on my father's side Pimbo and my grandmother Pimmi" p9

"My grandparents from my mother's side, Opa and Oma were from Salzburg and were known far afield as great hikers and cross-country skiers" p9

"Oma and Oppa were buried in an avalanche" p9

"Ute, my sister, died of diabetes when she was four days short of twelve" p10

"Pimbo died of diabetes less than two years after Ute, at the age of sixty-seven" p11

"On April 19, the day before Adolf Hitler's birthday, I was admitted into the Jungvolk (the junior section of the Hitler's Youth) as was the custom." (Leunens, 2008, pp. 9-12)

b) Characters and Scenes

To streamline the narrative, characters like Johannes's father and grandmother were completely removed from the film adaptation. This subsequently omitted related scenes and subplots, such as:

- The father trying to help Elsa escape the Nazis (Leunens, 2008, p. 111)
- Arguments between the parents about ideology (Leunens, 2008, pp. 27-28)

- Johannes caring for his ailing grandmother after his mother's death (Leunens, 2008, pp. 125-127)

c) Love Story

Due to depicting Jojo as only 10 years old, most scenes depicting Johannes's adult romantic obsession, desire to marry Elsa, and sexual feelings were cut, including:

"I longed to touch her, to squeeze her, feel her as solid reality...I admit with shame, I experienced premature climax" (Leunens, 2008, p. 121)

"I wanted to pull him out of there by his feet and toss him out the window for once and for all" (Leunens, 2008, p. 75) - describing his jealousy over Elsa's fiancé Nathan.

The film focuses solely on presenting Jojo's feelings as an innocent, Iczipped boyhood crush.

d) Ending

The novel's ending, depicting Johannes living with and eventually marrying Elsa after the war, only for their marriage to deteriorate into resentment and misery, was significantly condensed. The film's ending focuses solely on Jojo choosing to finally tell Elsa the truth about the Nazis' defeat and letting her leave to be free, culminating in a celebratory dance outside his home.

4.3 Addition

a) Character: Captain K

To provide a distinctive antagonist and inject more comedic friction, the character of Captain Klendenzdorf was created specifically for the film. He serves as the harsh instructor for the Hitler Youth training Jojo attends. This addition enabled new scenes such as:

- Captain K berating Jojo's mother Rosie when she confronts him about indoctrinating children
- Captain K saving Elsa from being caught during a Nazi inspection
- Captain K ultimately helping a captured Jojo escape detention



Picture. 6 Captain K's introduction at 04:24



Picture. 7 rescuing Jojo at 1:31:11

b) Scene: Jojo Reading Letter

A pivotal new scene was added where Jojo reads aloud a falsified letter he wrote from Elsa's fiancé Nathan, initially to discourage her from missing him. However, this scene also sets up Jojo's ultimate decision to confess his deception and help Elsa escape, once again emphasizing his childlike yet noble crush over an adult romantic obsession.



Picture. 8 The new letter-reading scenes at 1:36:55

Through these myriad variations, reductions, and additions, Waititi crafted a distinctive satirical comedy that retained the novel's core themes about indoctrination and humanity, while making the narrative more accessible to mainstream audiences

by removing mature content. The changes transformed "Caging Skies" into a comedic yet poignant coming-of-age story critiquing fascism through a child's eyes.

5. CONCLUSION

Taika Waititi's film adaptation of Christine Leunens' novel "Caging Skies" into the critically acclaimed "Jojo Rabbit" represents a masterful exercise in transforming source material. Through judicious variations, reductions, and additions, Waititi crafted a wholly distinct yet thematically resonant work that satirizes the fascist ideologies of Nazi Germany through a darkly comedic lens.

The most striking variation was the tonal shift from the novel's sober, haunting exploration of Nazi history to the film's irreverent, comedic perspective that lampooned Hitler's regime as ludicrous and delusional. This genre change, coupled with the transition of the setting to Germany itself, firmly established Waititi's signature style of using humor to confront serious subject matter.

Moreover, visualizing the protagonist's internal ideological struggles through the imaginary presence of Adolf Hitler was a brilliant creative decision. It externalized the insidious nature of indoctrination, while adding delightfully meta layers of humor having the Führer himself berate a child for failing to be a proper Nazi.

Crucial reductions like removing mature romantic and sexual plot lines allowed "Jojo Rabbit" to be a more family-friendly, coming-of-age tale. Omitting extensive backstories also tightened the narrative focus on the protagonist's personal journey. Additions like Captain Klenzendorf injected extra comedic friction while personifying oppressive authoritarianism.

Ultimately, through these transformative choices, Waititi's "Jojo Rabbit" emerges as a powerful satirical statement that uses laughter to dismantle dangerous ideologies and underscore our common humanity, even in the darkest of times. By filtering the horrors of history through a child's perspective, the film poignantly depicts how even the most hateful dogmas are learned constructs that can be unlearned.

This deft adaptation firmly establishes Waititi as a truly visionary artist capable of finding humor

in humanity's most disturbing societal flaws. "Jojo Rabbit" will undoubtedly be studied as a paragon of how to take weighty source material and evolve it into an entertaining yet profound cinematic experience that leaves a lasting emotional impact.

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