

## An Ecranisation Study of Novel *The Kite Runner* and its Film Adaptation

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*First Received: 25-08-2022*

*Final Proof Received: 31-05-2023*

### Abstract

This thesis studied about Ecranisation Study of Novel into Film *The Kite Runner*. The objectives of this research is to find out the reduction, addition, and modification of novel into film *The Kite Runner*. This research used descriptive qualitative and used theory of Eneste's Ecranisation to analysis the reduction, addition, and modification in ecranisation study. The data collections of this research are intrinsic elements of novel *The Kite Runner* and the film *The Kite Runner*. In collecting data, the researcher used note taking as the instrument to find out the reduction, addition, and modification of novel into film. In this research, there were some reduction, addition and modification that have occurred on the plot, the characters, point of view and some events and depiction in the film.

Keywords: Ecranisation, The Kite Runner, Novel, Film.

Popular novels are frequently adapted into film and television because studios want to capitalize on an already successful concept and bring it to a wider audience and popularity. In response to the phenomenon, there is a terminology which is frequently used to study this mechanism. Eneste (1991), states ecranisation is white screening or transfer / removal of a novel into a film. The definition is based on the origin of the word, ecran, which means the screen. So, ecranisation intended as filming the novel.

The differences that occur between the film and the novel adaptation, according Eneste (1991), is a creative process that can be performed by the director by conducting the addition, subtraction and appearance variations

storyline. The dissimilar medium between the cinema transformation outcomes with novel adaptation, generating a shift in function, notably in the of tale. The approach in this study is based on the assumption that these discrepancies exist.

There are many novels that have been adapted into films, whose process will create a combination of art and business. When a novel are transformed into film, it is actually aimed to get more and broader audiences. Novels interest the readers through their imagination and this could depend on the individual capacity in interpreting the text including the mental-storage. Different from that, films directly approach the viewers' senses audio-visually. As a result, films not only provide more

than just the verbal impact, but they also present dramatic performance, sound effects, music and moving pictures that help them see and hear at once (Bonita, J., et al. , 2006). In transforming the novel into film, the film makers help the audiences to get the meaning of the literary work easily and quickly.

[A] film, which is considered a pop art or collective art is more easily interpreted by the audience through the assimilation of photography, dialogue, art, music, time in a different manner too: a novel tends to portray about the past, whilst a film suggests a present time, because the audience feel and experience the happenings while watching the film (Bluestone, George, 7). Through film, the audiences do not require reading deeply with their imagination or do not require taking much time for playing the game; they are only need to sit and to see. They were engaged through the perception of the aural and the visual with presentational form (Bluestone, 1957).

Khaled Hosseini published *The Kite Runner* in 2003. This novel relates the melodramatic experiences of Amir, a young boy from the Wazir Akbar Khan district of Kabul, whose closest friend is Hassan, his father's young Hazara servant. The story is set against a backdrop of tumultuous events, from the fall of Afghanistan's monarchy through the Soviet military intervention, the exodus of refugees to Pakistan and the United States, and the rise of the Taliban regime. Many people believe that some parts of the novel are based on Hossein's childhood.

*The Kite Runner* was published in 2003 and in 2007 adapted as a motion picture starring Khalid Abdalla (Amir), Homayoun Ershadi (Baba), and Ahmad Khan Mahmoodzada (Hassan). Directed by Marc Forster and with a screenplay by David Benioff, the movie won numerous awards. The novel was also adapted to the stage by Bay Area playwright Matthew Spangler. Not only adapted into the play, In September 2011 Bloomsbury published a Graphic Novel adaptation of Kite Runner

([Wikipedia contributors, 2021](#)).

When a movie is made based on a book that millions of people have read, the first question asked often pertains to the faithfulness of the resultant cinematic product to its written inspiration. In the case of *The Kite Runner*, director Marc Forster and screenwriter David Benioff have taken pains to provide the best screen representation possible of Khaled Hosseini's best-selling novel. Time constraints have forced some changes and contractions but, on the whole, it's hard to imagine a more effective and affecting adaptation.

In adapting a novel into film, regarding to many aspects and parties in the process of adaptation, the change is inevitable. The, cultural and historical background of the director, screenwriter, ideological producer, and distributor have importance role in giving the influences on how the film looks like. Yu (2020) believes that some western film filmmakers do not have to incorporate the material of the original works into their films after selecting literary texts. They can even ignore the original works' contents and simply borrow some of them and reproduce them. Its limitations stem from the activity's image, a large audience, and an industrialized style of production.

## Results and Discussion

Ecranisation, according Eneste (1991) was white screening. Ecranisation is a process or removal or appointment of a novel into a film. The transfer of the novel to the silver screen inevitably lead to the emergence of a variety of changes. Therefore, ecranisation also be referred to as the process of reduction, the addition (extension), and changes to a variety.

The reduction of some parts of the novel in the process of adapting a novel into a film is inevitable. In *The Kite Runner*, Marc Forster and also David Benioff decided to omit the portrayal of some scenes in the novel when it is transformed into movie version. McFarlane (1996) correctly pointed out that when a major cardinal function is deleted

or altered in the film version of a novel, we perceive it as an important change, which is “apt to occasion critical outrage and popular dissatisfaction”. In plainer words, if one of these cardinal functions is changed, we feel betrayed and we feel we are not treated to the story we were promised by a reference to the book and author.

It is true that there must be problems to encounter in the process of adapting a novel to a film, because the filmmaker or the director cannot avoid changing the original opinion of the novelist while transforming the literary work to the screen. As a result, many films are seen as unsuccessful and are quickly forgotten by audiences. The reason is that viewers look for equivalence in the movie; they want their favorite literary work to be recreated into a film via filmmaking methods that are as close as possible (Diniz, 2005).

### ***The Reduction of Plot and Events***

The plot in the film is shorter and it has more complications to express. All of these are resulted from the adjustment of the author’s point of view to the cinematic format. As Wolf believes that “Art is a kind of collective production although it is created privately or individually” (Wolf, 1998). Literature and culture in general is a combination of the author’s own creativity and the implicit or explicit influence of the surrounding environment.

There are some reduction in the plots or the events portrayed in the film. In *The Kite Runner* film, there are big chunks missed from the novel. Some parts of the movie’s plot go in reverse with the novel. The plot seems a little bit confusing since the sequence of event can’t be thoroughly told as it is in the novel.

Reduction is the reducing or cutting elements of the story of literary works in the transformation process. Eneste (1991) states that the reduction can be carried out on literary works such story elements, plot, characters, setting, and atmosphere. One of the reason that influence the reduction is that film is an

art whose limits depend on a moving image, mass audience and industrial production (Bluestone, 1957).

In *The Kite Runner*, the reduction can be seen through some events which are left to happen without any flowery dramatical events. In the novel, Soraya and Amir initially decide not to adopt any children. However, after a quite a long discussion, eventually they adopt Sohrab. In the movie, because of the time limitation of the movie, they don’t discuss it. They do adopt Sohrab directly. The novel also described the Amir’s difficulty in adopting Sohrab. He has problems with the Embassy regarding the adoption of Sohrab. Meanwhile in the movie, he simply puts the boy on the plane and takes him home with him without any difficulty.

Hasan is Amir’s closest childhood friend. He is described as having a China doll face, green eyes, and a harelip. The reader eventually discovers that Hassan is actually the son of Baba and Sanaubar, although Hassan never knows this during his lifetime. Hassan was later shot by the Taliban led by Mohammed Omar for refusal to abandon Amir’s property. Although in the novel Hassan’s life as an adult is told in detail, but in the movie it vaguely mentioned. The film seems more focus on the relationship and the development of Sohrab and Amir as a character. The helplessness and the misery that Hassan experienced from his early life to his death actually play an important role in touching people’s hearts. The reduction of Hassan’s depiction in the novel when transforming it to the film creates a different feeling and sense of melodramatic atmosphere to the film.

### ***The Reduction of the Characters and Characterization***

The process of adapting novel into film also happens in the characters. In *The Kite Runner*, there are some characters whose role are reduced or even eliminated from the screen. It is due to the development of the characters which are more forward compared to that in

the novel or maybe it is simply because of the industrial purposes as Disney has done in many of its animated adaptations. As McQuade (1994) highlights the distinctions between Barrie's original Peter Pan and Disney's 1953 animated adaptation, he argues that Disney inflicted the most harm to the character of Mr. Darling, ignoring Barrie's core motivation for inventing Peter Pan. The reduction of character and characterization can result in the shifting of value of the story.

In the novel, there is a character named Sanaubar. She is Ali's gypsy wife. She is actually Baba's lover and also the mother of Hassan. Shortly after Hassan's birth, she runs away from home and becomes a gypsy. She later returns to Hassan in his adulthood. To make up for her neglect she provided a grandmother figure for Sohrab, Hassan's son. However, in the movie, there is no existence of Sanaubar. Her existence is only implied through the other relationship among characters in the movie. In *The Kite Runner* movie, there are some characters and events which do not fit into the the depiction in the novel. In the Novel, Hassan's twelfth birthday is depicted, while in the movie none of this happens. In the novel, as a gift of Hasan's twelfth birthday, Amir's father pays for surgery to repair his harelip. The surgery of Hassan's harelip symbolizes the close relationship that Baba and Hassan have. However, in the movie, Hassan doesn't have a harelip. So that, the portrayal of Baba and hassan's relationship in the movie is quite different from what happens in the novel. Hassan's cleft lip is one of his most memorable, vivid attributes and one of the most referred to features that Amir uses to describe him to the reader. The split in the top of Hassan's lip marks Hassan's true status in society. It acts as a symbol of poverty, which is one of the things that separates him from Amir, because Hassan and his family do not have the money to fix it. Instead, Baba, Hassan's biological father, chooses to pay for Hassan's surgery as a way of showing his secret fatherly love to him. Moreover, in the novel, Ali has a crippled

right leg, while in the movie, both of his legs work perfectly.

Assef is the main antagonist of the novel. He is the son of an Afghan father and a German mother and ironically, given that he is of mixed origin, an advocate of Pashtun dominance over the Hazara. In the novel, it is vividly described that Assef is tall and blond; has German ethnic heritage. As a teenager, he is a neighborhood bully and is described as a "sociopath" by Amir. Many of his cruel actions as a child include raping Hassan as a means of revenge against Amir, and Assef idolized Adolf that is why he gives Amir a biography of Adolf Hitler as a birthday present. As an adult, he joins the Taliban and rapes and abuses Hassan's son Sohrab.

Although Assef still serves as the main antagonist, but the novel does not reveal any of his origin as the German descent. In the movie, Assef is shown as dark-haired; background not fully discussed. There is no mentioning about Adolf Hitler as Assef idol. This point is left out completely from the novel. In the novel, Assef seems very proud of his mix-bloodness. This pride also makes him become a violent person. It seems that there is an attempt to ameliorate the relationship between his German blood and also his violent action. In the novel, it emphasizes German is described awfully by the existence of Assef who is actually inspired by Adolf Hitler. As a Director, he may want to reduce the bad depiction of Germany in the novel by reducing the characterization of Adolf Hitler in the film.

### ***The Changes of the Rape Scene***

In the film, there are some part of the important scenes that is changed. The changes might occur in the realms of tale concepts, storytelling technique, and so on. The changes in transformation are determined by a number of elements, including the media employed, the audience's inquiry, and the amount of playing time. According to Eneste (1991), with ecranisation, directors felt the need to make changes in the film, giving the appearance that

a film based on a novel was not originally as novel.

One of the changes portrayed in the film is the scene of the rape of Hassan in the middle of his attempt to run after the kite. In the novel, the rape of Hassan was described in full detail. Meanwhile, in the movie, the rape of Hassan is not shown, only implied. The scene was depicted in a less harrowing manner than originally planned, with no nudity, and with the sexual aspect suggested only very briefly at the end of the scene. The film makers are actually aware of the controversy that may occur because of the existence of the rape scene. Although the scene was implied without any exposition of sexual aspect, the portrayal of the rape scene, especially, same-sex rape, in Afghanistan considered to be a taboo.

During the making of the film, a 12-year-old Afghan boy starring in the upcoming film *The Kite Runner* fears he and his family could be ostracized or even attacked because of a rape scene that he says he reluctantly acted in — a sequence the family wants cut. Ahmad Khan Mahmudzada plays the role of young Hassan who is raped by a bully in a pivotal part of the best-selling novel, on which the movie is based. His family says the scene will offend Afghans. “In Afghanistan, rape is not acceptable at all. This is against Afghan dignity (Tang, 2007).

Rape is embarrassing for the victim in any culture. It is a breach of a person boundaries. Assef raped Hasan in order to show his dominance and to indeed embarrass Hassan. Hassan’s rape is the source of Amir’s guilt, which motivates his search for redemption, while stopping Sohrab’s rape becomes Amir’s way of redeeming himself. In each case, rape is a critical element in the novel’s plot. As a motif, rape is important for multiple reasons. It is not just physically violent, but it is also an attack on the victim’s emotions and dignity. Rape in this sense represents complete physical and mental domination of those who don’t have power by those who do, and the victims of rape that we see in the novel. However, the film makers have to be able to adjust with the social and

cultural condition of the setting of the movie, Afghanistan. That is why considering as one of the most important scenes in the novel, the film makers tend to compromise with the condition.

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### ***The Change of the Narrative Point of View***

Being told from non-Afghanistan director point of view, many aspect in the movie seems to lose its messages. In the novel, Afghanistan is portrayed as a nation. The novel briefly depicts the transition era in Afghanistan officials, and the effects which influence the life of Afghans. On the contrary, The transition era in Afghanistan is not briefly elaborated. Regarding to the fact that it is actually a Hollywood movie, the visualization of the kite tournament takes most portion and is exaggeratedly explored, rather than the character development of the story. The novel seems glorifying the struggle of Afghanistan as a nation facing hard times, while the movie seems to underline the general message of the journey of Amir in finding a way to be good again.

In the movie, it seems that the central character who has a lot of psychological problem is Sohrab. Sohrab as the center character who is obviously having psychological problem dealing with his past. The characters in the film lack the power to engage and to build a strong attachment/chemistry. The same dialogues are there, but the mood is missing. Meanwhile, in the novel, Amir is psychologically haunted by his past. The personal qualities of each

character, how they deal with problems and how each character interacts with the other character are perfectly elaborated. If we compare to the percentage of the appearance in movie version and in novel version, he steals the limelight that result from his psychological condition. It seems that Sohrab is one who suffers from trauma more severely than Amir. Amir actually faces a terrible trauma that result from his past. The novel version actually delivers this fact better and more detail if we compare to the movie version. Novel provides a vivid description of Amir's trauma.

In the novel, Baba is depressed while living in America. He misses Afghanistan. There is a sense of homeliness that baba experienced the first generation of immigrant while live in the US. However, he seems happier in the movie. The fact that Baba and Amir are actually refugee from the war in their country does not become the point in the movie. It rather glorifies the US as an immigrant nation which welcome every citizen of the world to be successful there.

### Conclusion

From three possible processes of ecranisation that covers the process of reduction, the addition (extension), and the changes, the researcher only finds two processes which are the reduction and the changes of variety.

The reductions cover the reduction of plots and events which reflected through the reduction of the struggle of Amir to bring Sohrab to the US. It is one of crucial moments in Amir's life and it is a symbol of redemption to Hassan. However, the event is not fully portrayed in the film. The helplessness and the misery of Hassan are not adequately represented in the film.

The reduction also happens in the portrayal of the characters and characterizations in the film. The absence of Sanaubar (Hassan's mother and Baba's mistress) in the film, the deletion of Hassan's harelip and also the omission of Germany in the film play important

roles in creating the atmosphere of the story. The reduction of some parts of the novel while transferring to the film is inevitable, but its consequences impact the way people perceive the values, messages and the atmosphere of the story.

The changes comprise the change of the rape scene of Hassan in the film and the change of narrative point of view of the story. The different portrayal of the rape scene in the novel and in the film can also be translated as the way of filmmaker to adapt to a certain sensitive topic in the story in order to be accepted by the viewers of the film. The change of the narrative point of view is closely related to the different background of the author and the filmmaker. The different narrative point of view that occurs in the film determines the theme and mood of the story.

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