

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Background of the Research

Movie adaptations appeared in the late nineteenth century in the history of cinema, which involves a written medium such as literature. All written works in any genre (containing artistic or aesthetic meaning) that an author has created on a certain subject are considered works of literature. If we look up its definition, literature is defined as the body of written works produced in a particular language, country, or age. It can be said that literature can be used to express an idea or to mirror or relate an era's system or situation. As an English Department student, the researcher is brought to be surrounded and familiar with literary works, ranging from the classical to contemporary ones. Additionally, since literary studies encompass the study of several genres, such as poetry, fiction, drama, and film, students are also introduced to analyzing various media derived from literary works, such as movies, music, and video games. Mario Klarer states that at the end of the twentieth century, it was impossible to neglect film as a semi-textual genre both influenced by and exerting influence on literature and literary criticism (1998:54). In this particular research, the object of the study is a movie adaptation which is the process of converting a written text into a medium such as a movie.

This analysis focuses specifically on novel-to-film adaptation as this form of adaptation is culturally significant and widely consumed. As we take up the subject of movie adaptation, it is only normal to briefly about its adaptation theory. One of its prominent theorists is Linda Hutcheon, a Canadian university professor who works in literary theory

and is mainly known for her postmodernism theories. In her book titled “*A Theory of Adaptation*”, published in 2006, she wrote that there is a link between the literary work and the movie, yet there may be certain differences between them, which is why we may be able to compare them. Hutcheon states that adaptation studies are often comparative studies (2006:6). Moreover, Alfred Uhry stated that adapting is a bit like redecorating (Hutcheon, 2006). That statement can be interpreted as when an adapter is adapting a literary work, he/she might as well keep the same scenario from the original work, although he/she tends to adorn the made adaptation right according to his/her preferences, to produce the message that he/she would want to communicate to the audiences. Studying and analyzing adaptation is not as easy a task as just comparing a literary work and a movie, but it also owes us to be familiar with its theme parks, historical enactments, and virtual reality experiments (Hutcheon, 2006:12). Then, there is a process to follow to examine in detail an adaptation going from its directors, adapters, plots, characters, settings and so one... to consequently uncover about their challenges and motivations. Because an adaptation is a complex process that requires creativity and reinterpreting written narratives for a visual medium (Dixit, 2025).

Nowadays, there are several movie adaptations which are portraying LGBTQ+ relationships such as *Call Me by Your Name* - which aired in 2017 but is set in the 1980s in Italy and tells about the romantic relationship between a 17-year-old boy named Elio Perlman and a 24-year-old academic named Oliver, *Brokeback Mountain* in 2005- which tells the story of a forbidden relationship between two cowboys, *The Danish Girl* in 2015 which portrays one of the first known recipients of sex reassignment surgery in this fiction; or also *Love, Simon* in 2018- which is a high-school student comedy drama. All

these movie adaptations mentioned above tell a different story and of course with different circumstances from each other, and of course from different eras.

It is a fact that media representations have a big impact on how people in today's culture can interpret various sexual orientations and other social norms. However, some representations tend to limit their characters' sexual identities around heteronormativity, which is the norm known of society. In real life, it is important to analyze how different sexual orientations are portrayed in the media because these representations influence societal opinions, cultural concepts, and personal self-identifications. (Adams & Schilit, 2017). Understanding the difficulties of the different sexual orientations that are portrayed in the media is important for developing tolerance, empathy, and a deeper comprehension of the complex nature of human sexuality. It makes it possible to acknowledge the variety of identities, which can help reduce prejudice, encourage acceptance, and give people the confidence to be who they truly are (Johnson, 2019). In this context, this research examines the recent film adaptation based on a romance novel written by Casey McQuinston, an American young adult author. An article from the Tatler describes the essence of the film as being about two male foes falling in love and breaking free from an old, heteronormative establishment (Nast, 2023). Speaking of the movie adaptation, it has been directed by Matthew Lopez, and it premiered on Prime Video on the 11<sup>th</sup> of August of this year.

## **1.2 Identification of the Problem**

Nowadays, BookTok is the new way of finding out which genre of book is suitable according to each taste; the term BookTok is the combination of book and the TikTok platform where readers review books and share their favorite tropes, lines, or characters.



This is how the researcher came across the upcoming adaptation of *Red White, and Royal Blue* for the first time, which led me to look for its novel. After reading the novel or watching the movie, it can be observed that both mediums are set in a contemporary era along with their themes and representations. It is to point out that even if nowadays people are starting to be open minded when it comes to sexuality, it is still quite not the case for others; this story can help reflect how it can happen to anyone and how it is to live a normal life however the sexuality and the gender of two people. Both the movie adaptation of *Red, White and Royal Blue* and its novel tell a contemporary rom-com fiction story involving the son of the President of the United States (US) and the prince of the British/ United Kingdom (UK) royal family. The novel presents several impactful daily themes that are reflected in its adaptation. Precisely, the researcher has chosen to analyze both the novel and its adaptation for this particular reason, as the topic of LGBTQ+ is growing broader, still few people know much about how relationships work depending on the genders, identifications, power dynamics, and cultural differences.

Much research has already been done regarding movie adaptations and sexuality. Still, only a few, to my knowledge, have resulted in challenging pre-existing stereotypes and tropes in this genre. The researcher will take this opportunity to talk about all the relevant themes expressed in both the novel and the movie, also it will be analyzed whether the movie follows exactly the plot from the book or if there are some differences and additions made in the script. After all the studies, the researcher will demonstrate how both of the mediums challenge stereotypes that most people are familiar with regarding queer relationships.

### 1.3 Review of Related Literature

In this section, the author has gathered different types of research that are all related to the topic of movie adaptation, using structuralism and also narrative structure analysis, and those will be used as references and supports for the author's achievement of her research. It is important to note that the movie just aired recently, which made it difficult for the researcher to find a thesis based on it.

This journal article is a collective writing made in 2023 by Denitha Nafalitha, Kastam Syamsi, Talitha Djulia Claresta, and Mita Saputri, and it is titled "Representing Queer in Popular Literature: Reader Analysis on Casey McQuiston's Red, White & Royal Blue". Their study aims to research the novel readers' response to the queer representation, by using Stuart Hall's Encoding-Decoding reception theory on the comments left on the Goodreads website: it is revealed that its readers are categorized within these following three groupings those who adopt the dominant-hegemonic position, a negotiated position, or an oppositional position in their interpretation of the queer themes. Their study is concluding that the queer representation of the main characters is a key factor in the novel's popularity.

Arishma Elisha wrote a journal article titled "Bisexuality in Andre Aciman's Call Me By Your Name" in 2021. Elisha's research used intrinsic and extrinsic approaches and the concepts of sexuality, sexual orientation theory, the concept of bisexuality, queer, and personality structure to find symptoms, factors, and personality structure of Elio and Oliver's bisexuality, the two main characters from the novel. Elisha found two factors of Elio's bisexual interest, which are first that he acquired genetically because his father was once bisexual, and second, since Elio is still young, he is still in his period of curiosity

when it comes to discovering his sexuality. Also, Elisha's study elaborates on the Id, the ego, and the superego of Elio's character to develop more about his sexuality.

"Comparative Study on the Intrinsic Elements of the Hobbit Novel and Movie Script", written collectively by Winanda Ayu Ningtyas, Udayani Permanaludin, and Dedi Sulaeman in 2019. They use the comparative theory of Racmat Ddjoko Pradopo with the structuralism method to analyze the intrinsic elements of the novel and the movie script to demonstrate any similarities and differences between them. Their analysis displays that there are some similarities in the characters from the novel and the movie, but also some differences are found in the scenes and places of the movie, which all together affect the historical narrative of the story; as the authors indicate, it is the complexity of adapting to a screenplay.

Dr. Jyati Dixit wrote a journal article between March and April of 2025, with the title "Transforming Stories: Exploring the Art and Challenges of Adapting Literature into Film". Dr. Dixit looks into how books are adapted into movies and explains that it can be complex because filmmakers need to find a balance between what they want to do, what the book is about, and what the audience expects. This article explains that there is a difference between reading a book and letting readers imagine it and filming all of it by using pictures and sounds. Dr. Dixit also concludes that both books and movies can show what is going on in society and politics, which can influence the audience.

Next, M. Keanu Adepati and Samanik wrote "Narrative Structure of *The Minds* of Billy Milligan Novel and Split Film" in 2018, in which they aim to exhibit how the movie adaptation by M. Night Shyamalan conforms to the novel by Billy Milligan. This research uses a qualitative method in order to detail how the adaptation was made; also



they use Tzvetan Todorov's theory with a structuralism approach. The research results as there are differences in the narrative structure according to the novel and the one according to the film.

Hereafter, an article written by Alimah B. Sholihah, Ikwan Setiawan, and Dina D. Kusumayanti in 2023 and titled "Transformation of *The Giver* Novel into Film by Phillip Noyce". With the uses of Roland Barthes' Mythology theory to reveal the meaning behind signs and the constructed ideology, and also Linda Hutcheon's adaptation theory to disclose the motives behind the making of the adaptation of Lois Lowry's novel *The Giver*, directed by Philip Noyce, the researchers pointed out that transforming a literary medium of texts into the audiovisual form of a film necessarily involves some changes. For example, in the film, the adaptor has changed a bit how he approached the themes of totalitarianism, liberalism, and the pursuit of freedom on-screen; as for the motives of the adaption, it appears to be a blend of personal, political, and economic considerations.

This article titled "The Analysis of Fantasy and Representation of Female on Gay and Male Homoerotic Relationships in the <sup>1</sup>Yaoi Genre", was written by Bakhrul Khair Amal in 2021. Amal's article discusses his study to determine the similarities and the background of <sup>2</sup>Fujoshi; the latter term is a Japanese term for females who are fans of manga, anime, and novels that feature romantic relationships between men. For this study, Amal used an ethnographic approach such as doing in-depth interviews and participatory observations through cyberspace. As a result, Amal concluded that they initially liked manga and anime, those who were curious about the Yaoi genre, and those who felt bored

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<sup>1</sup> It is a Japanese term that refers to manga, or anime or novel portraying romantic or sexual relationships between male characters.

<sup>2</sup> According to the Collin's dictionary, it refers to a fangirl of Yaoi (boy's love) comics.

with the love story between men and women, as well as various other reasons that made them finally addicted to the love story between men to have sexual fantasies between fellow men (2021).

Following, we have Marisa Umniyatul A'la's thesis on "The differences of PI's character between novel and movie on Yann Martel's and Ang Lee's *Life of Pi*" in 2014. A'la's thesis objectives are to reveal the development of PI's characters in both the novel and the movie, and to discuss how their differences do influence the Character's developments shown from the novel's point of view contrasted to the movie's. Thus, A'la combined the psychoanalysis literary theory with film adaptation theory. A'la found many differences which found in the novel and film *Life of Pi*, as they have their opinion and style of delivery giving the message from the literary work: on one side, the novel uses beautiful language and detailed explanations in telling the story, and on the other side, the film with 3D motion picture abridge the story for the audience so that they can understand it.

Next is research titled "A film adaptation on the characterization of main characters from Lauren Kate's *Fallen*", conducted by Muhammad Rizal in 2017 in Malang. Rizal has explored the characterization of main characters both in the novel and in the film, and he also explained how the film adaptation was done based on his previous exploration of the characterization. Therefore, Rizal has also used Linda Hutcheon's adaptation theory. Rizal's findings showed that there are aspects of Luce's character in the novel that are not shown in the film, and the same goes for Daniel's. In addition, as



principles of adaptation and intertextual, Rizal found that there are transformations, <sup>3</sup>haplology, and modification in the characters of Luce and Daniel in the film.

Another research gathered for reference is a thesis written by Siti Hairun Nufus Yushar in 2018, carrying the title “The Adaptation of *Peter and Wendy* Novel (1911) into *Pan* Film (2015)”. Yushar’s objectives were to find out the adapter's background and explain the adaptation's motives. Hence, Yushar displayed and categorized all the data found from the novel and the film, then analyzed and explained the data using Linda Hutcheon’s theory. The results showed seven financial attractions, four cultural capitals, five psychological motives, and no legal constraints from the adaptation.

Next, a study written in 2016 by John W. Goldsmith and titled “The Evolution of Queer Representation in the Young Adult Genre”. In his thesis, Goldsmith examined three novels that made large contributions to the advancement of queer representation across the young adult genre, more precisely in terms of their historical and critical contexts. Goldsmith concluded that – *The Perks of Being a Wallflower*, *Boy Meets Boy*, and *Aristotle and Dante Discover the Secrets of the Universe* – each shows the evolution in queer representation across the genre, as its authors were inspired by the lack of depiction of queer youth portrayed by John Donovan’s novel decades before them.

Here is the next research, which is an undergraduate dissertation in psychology written by Jakub Guskos and Emily Nordmann, from the School of Psychology and Neuroscience, University of Glasgow, which is titled “Minorities in streaming services: The impact of LGBTQ+ character representation on viewers” in 2023. Their study was not only done on LGBTQ+ audiences but also on others, with a total of one hundred and

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<sup>3</sup> contraction of a word by omission of one or more similar sounds or syllables (Merriam-Webster, 2023)

forty-nine participants who answered their questionnaire. They have found two phenomena: the first one is that LGBTQ+ characters are often given very short screen time which leads to a late identity exploration; the second phenomenon found points out that gay men are mostly portrayed stereotypically. In responding to the research question, "What is the impact of LGBTQ+ character representation in streaming services on both non-LGBTQ+ and LGBTQ+ audiences?" this study explored psychological concepts that have been studied before in the context of streaming services and also identified novel concepts through an exploratory, mixed-methods approach.

As the next research used for reference, this is a thesis written by Syeh Nathaniel Ahmad Davu in 2023, which is titled "Dystopian Sub-genre Characteristics as Represented in James's *The Children of Men*: A Narrative Structure Analysis". Davu found that there is a connection between the term genres and Tzvetan Todorov's theory of narrative structure, and here the genre that Davu is analyzing is dystopia, which focuses on finding the meaning behind the structure of texts. For this analysis, Davu used Todorov's narrative structure in addition to Terri Chung's dystopian characteristics theory. These are the results found by the researcher: James's novel contains all five stages of Todorov's narrative structure, representing the characteristics of the dystopian sub-genre, as the changes from each stage adjust to the changes in the protagonist Theo's life. Overall, the state of equilibrium starts with the portrayal of the dystopian society control, then the disruption of equilibrium and the recognition of disruption starts when the protagonist realizes that the society in which he lives is defective; so as a resolution of the disruption, it is shown when the protagonist confronts one of the antagonists in the story as it is the final events, and eventually, the new equilibrium is about Theo's plan to escape the dystopian world.

Then, Nurul Aulia Rahmah wrote a thesis titled “Cinematizing the Victorian Novel to Cinema *Pride and Prejudice*” in 2022. Rahmah aimed to find the differences between the setting and the conflict reflected in both Jane Austen’s novel and Joe Wright’s movie adaptation by using Linda Hutcheon’s adaptation theory. Her research reveals that the film depicts the social conditions of life in England in 1813 by including characters with different social and economic statuses; though its difference with the novel is that the adaptation focuses more on the topic of finding true love rather than exploring deeper and portraying the social class differences and the role of women in Victorian society.

Lastly, a thesis written by Syifa Fauziah in 2017 with the title “Disney Adaptation of *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* (1996): The Differences between Characters in Novel and Film”. Fauziah’s research is set to determine the differences in how the characters from the novel *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* by Victor Hugo and the 1996 Disney film adaptation are depicted; with the use of Linda Hutcheon’s theory. It resulted in the film adaptation being altered and omitting some aspects of some characters’ descriptions compared to the novel.

The previous studies exhibited above all cover the topics of comparing novels and their movie adaptations, analyzing characters’ development and intrinsic elements, and also the use of structuralism theory and narrative structure analysis. Some of the previous studies above use adaptation theory, while others use the structuralism approach and narrative structure theory to analyze intrinsic elements in order of both the novels and their adaptations, which helped them get the results they expected based on their research.



## 1.4 Research Questions

To go further with the research, some questions will help get around the focus of the study, which are the following:

1. What are the prominent themes displayed in both the novel and the movie adaptation?
2. What are the key differences between the novel and the film adaptation in terms of characterization, plot, and theme, and how do they affect its interpretation?
3. How does the adaptation contribute to more authentic and diverse storytelling in mainstream media?

## 1.5 Scope of Research

*Red White and Royal Blue* is a young adult romance and comedy novel published around the year 2019. The novel itself displays several relevant topics that concern the realm of LGBTQ+, which is a rising topic nowadays. They made its movie adaptation, which was broadcast in August of the year 2023. Naturally, there are similarities but also differences between the novel to the film, which is what the researcher will detail further along in this thesis. This research will focus on the intrinsic elements of both the novel and the film to perform a comparative analysis.

## 1.6 Objective of Research

As stated above, to accomplish this study, the researcher has to follow several points of discussion to keep track of what has to be discussed and analyzed, according to the

research questions mentioned previously. The following are the objectives of this research:

1. To display the prominent themes in both the novel and the movie adaptation.
2. To discuss the key differences between the novel and the film adaptation in terms of characterization, plot, and theme, and how they affect its interpretation.
3. To show how the adaptation contributes to more authentic and diverse storytelling in mainstream media.

