

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of The Research

Turtles All the Way Down is a young adult novel by John Green, published in 2017. This work discusses many interesting aspects, such as exploring the main character's romance story with her childhood crush and also her struggles with mental illness, specifically *Obsessive Compulsive Disorder* (OCD). Aza Holmes, the main character, has been battling with OCD since she was a little kid, and her condition also affects her journey in figuring out her own love story, along with her teenage phase of the journey of self-discovery.

Since its publication, *Turtles All the Way Down* has been named a bestseller and Book of the Year by many publications. It was number one in the New York Times for several weeks and in the Wall Street Journal, the International, and Indie bestsellers (*Turtles All the Way Down*—John Green, n.d.). This novel was adapted into a film in 2024 directed by Hannah Marks with the same title.

Like the novel *Turtles All the Way Down*, the film adaptation explores Aza Holmes's journey in self-discovery while also dealing with her love life situation and OCD. *Turtles All the Way Down* is not the first work of John Green that has been adapted into a film. Starting with *The Fault in Our Stars*, which was initially published as a novel in 2012, this work of Green was adapted into a movie in 2014. The adaptation was considered a great success since the work won an MTV Award as “Movie of the Year” in 2015. Another work of Green that has been adapted into

a film is *Paper Towns* (2015). The movie is derived from Green's young adult novel, which was published in 2008.

As a young adult writer, John Green indeed owns his style. Relatable characters are often found in his works, where the characters will face real-life struggles and emotions. Readers, or even movie audiences, can connect their experiences and feelings with Green's character. He often keeps his characters authentic, showing them to be ordinary people who do not end up being heroes to save the day. If the character struggles, Green will show it as it is, just like in *Turtles All the Way Down* (2017).

In the film adaptation of *Turtles All the Way Down* (2017), John Green is also involved as an executive producer. Thus, his ideas and authenticity can still be seen in the adapted work. The adaptation keeps the main character as an ordinary youth who is struggling with OCD. Aza Holmes is still portrayed as a teenager who shares her emotions and experiences that are relatable to the audience. However, alterations still occur in the adaptation even though the original author is actively involved in the adaptation process.

The OCD theme and awareness that John Green emphasizes in the novel, mainly from the main character's point of view, is also expected to be delivered in the movie adaptation. Since the topic is relatable to the young generation, it is also crucial for the movie adaptation to convey the point, just as the readers of the original work did.

The alterations can be found in the narrative aspects, where Aza Holmes's journey in self-discovery while also dealing with OCD is modified when told,

shown, and interacted with in the film adaptation. This study will unpack the narrative alterations between *Turtles All the Way Down* (2017) and the movie adaptation released in 2024, determining how the differences affect the adapted work.

1.2 Identification of The Problem

The novel *Turtles All the Way Down* by John Green tells the story of a teenager who struggles with *obsessive-compulsive disorder* (OCD), while also still trying to figure herself out in the journey of self-discovery. Aza's surroundings, including friends, family, and relationships, significantly impact her process. In the film adaptation, it is expected that these narratives could be delivered to the audience effectively in a shorter work. Specifically, the narrative explains why the main character is experiencing OCD and managing her situation. However, several changes seem necessary in telling these narratives, showing that this film adaptation is not faithful to the original work. The main character's journey in experiencing OCD is shown to be less complex. Thus, this study addresses the narrative alterations in the 2024 movie adaptation of John Green's *Turtles All the Way Down*, which was initially published in 2017 as a novel with the same title. The writer will examine the narrative differences and discover why they happen in the film adaptation.

1.3 Review of Related Literature

Before doing this research, the writer has read and reviewed several studies or research related to either the literary work *Turtles All the Way Down* by John

Green or related to the film adaptation. To understand more about the novel, the writer reviewed research published in the International Journal of Linguistics and Culture by Fatima and Mehdi entitled “*A Psychodynamic Perspective of the Protagonists in the Novel “Turtles all the Way Down” By John Green*” (2022). This research analyses the elements of obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD) that are experienced by Aza Holmes, the main character in *Turtles All the Way Down*, from the psychodynamic perspective. Fatima and Mehdi thoroughly analyse Aza’s internal conflicts and her compulsive behaviours. Quotations from the novels are also included to support their findings.

The findings of their research show that the main character, who suffers from OCD, is helpless against her thoughts. Aza loses control over herself because of underlying forces that control her unconscious desires. They have succeeded in justifying the psychodynamic theory of OCD being used in this novel by John Green. Their research is relevant to the writer’s research since the novel *Turtles All the Way Down* tells the story of Aza Holmes as the main character who suffers from OCD and shows us how complex it is to experience from the point of view of a teenager. The writer will analyse the alterations of this narrative in the film adaptation and the literary work later in this research.

Another research on *Turtles All the Way Down* was conducted by Palarani and Hadiyanto, entitled “*Psychoanalytical Conflict, Anxiety, and Ego Defense Mechanism of Aza Holmes in John Green’s Turtles All the Way Down*” (2022). Their article is published in the *Journal of Cultural, Literary, and Linguistics Studies*. Their research aims to explain the psychoanalytical conflict, anxiety, and

ego defence mechanisms of Aza Holmes using Sigmund Freud's theory of psychoanalysis. They use Freud's psychoanalysis theory to find out Aza's internal and external conflict, which will lead to exploring the types of anxiety she is experiencing, followed by finding out the types of her ego defence mechanisms. Palarani and Hadiyanto find that Aza, as a dynamic character, manages her psychological conflicts and anxieties through a defence mechanism. Aza's weak ego causes conflicts within herself and with other characters, such as her best friend and love interest. She then defends herself by doing projection, fixation, and displacement. This article shows the writer that Aza's psychology could be explored and paid attention to. Her psychological condition plays a significant role in the storyline, and the writer should consider this aspect in finding the alterations to the narrative of this story when analyzing the film adaptation.

The third source the writer reviewed is published as a book forum in the Journal of the *American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry*. Dr Julie Chilton, MD, wrote “*Teen Love in TATWD*” (2018) in this journal. As a psychiatrist, Chilton talks about adolescent romance and mental health, specifically about OCD that exists in literary work. One of the works is *Turtles All the Way Down* by John Green, which addresses the complexities of mental illness while still exploring the young adult theme of teen romance. Aza Holmes, the main character, is portrayed as an adolescent who is experiencing OCD, and Chilton believes that heart and romance experiences are indeed a danger and need to be looked out for when it comes to teenagers' mentality. In this article, Chilton believes that in dealing with OCD, the roles of parents, clinicians, and the child themselves are all

very important. These aspects can be examined in both Green's work and its film adaptation. Aza's relationship with her family, personal therapist, and also with herself is an essential aspect of *Turtles All the Way Down*. Thus, the writer finds this article helpful in gaining a better understanding of the literary work and adding a professional perspective to the main issue. It will also be compared to the narrative aspect of the two works.

Following the previous review, research by Karim et al. (2024) entitled “*Vampire Transformation: A Comparative Study of the Novel and Film Dracula*”, published in CALL Journal Vol.6(2), has come to the writer’s attention. Karim et al. researched Bram Stoker’s novel *Dracula*, which was adapted into a film by Francis Ford Coppola. Through a comparative analysis, the results of their research indicate that several significant changes alter the meaning and experience of the narrative in the film adaptation of Bram Stoker’s *Dracula*. They discovered changes, including scene additions, character modifications, and a shift in the plot. One of the main changes is the addition of romantic elements between the characters Dracula and Mina, which are not present in the literary work, resulting in a shift from a Gothic horror theme to a more tragic love story. Karim et al. also support their comparative analysis using Linda Hutchoen’s adaptation theory. This research provides the writer with an insightful perspective on narrative alterations, particularly when this previous study analyzes narratives that revolve around the novel’s main character and its film adaptation. The way they present their findings is also quite detailed, as they compare the film scene with the novel’s narrative.

Another research that has been done regarding a movie adaptation was also published in the CALL Journal Vol . 6(1) by Hartati et al. (2024). Their article “*Application of an Adaptation Approach Through Narrative Comparison in the Novel and Film Twilight*” focuses on comparing the adaptation of Stephany Mayer’s first novel of the Twilight Saga and the 2008 film adaptation. By doing a close reading and close viewing technique in a qualitative descriptive method, their finding reveals that films often add additional stories to convey the setting more explicitly. The visualisations of characters in the movie also undergo modifications, yet remain consistent with how they are described in the novel. This research is also aligned with the upcoming research. Unfortunately, Hartati et al. do not use Linda Hutcheon’s adaptation theory; they use Eneste’s Ecranization (1991) approach and Seymour Chatman’s interpretation theory (2018). However, the way they present their results by dividing their findings into reductions, additions, and modifications makes it easy to comprehend.

The following research was conducted on film adaptation by Hidayat and Weda (2021). They do a comparative study of the narrative structure between the film and novel “*The Jungle Book*” to compare the narrative structure in “*The Jungle Book*”, a story published in 1894, and the film adaptation with the same title, released in 2016. Hidayat and Weda use Caroline Denton’s (2007) narrative structure theory and comparative literature approach. They found 13 similarities and 17 differences between the novel and the film adaptation regarding settings, characters, climax, and resolution aspects of narrative structure.

Hidayat and Weda extract the evidence from the novel and the film adaptation and then compare them using a table. Begin by presenting the general narrative structure in a table, and then display the differences and similarities in a separate table. The writer finds this research insightful; besides, the focus is on finding alterations between the narrative aspects of the novel and the film, and the way they present the result is also neat and presentable. The writer might consider using a similar approach to present the results of the data later in this research.

Another research in adaptation is done in 2023 by Barad, entitled “*Adaptive Narratives: Cinematic Echoes of Aravind Adiga's The White Tiger*”. This research analyzes the adaptation process of Aravind Adiga's novel into a film adaptation by Ramin Bahrani. Barad emphasizes cultural values within the adaptation, where the film reflects and criticizes the Indian society and class. This research is considered insightful because the author contrasts the narrative technique between the novel and the film. Barad stated that novels can explore multiple perspectives, while films are more linear or only show the viewer the narrative from one point of view. Barad also stated that truthfulness can be questioned from a research perspective.

Ramdani et al. also researched the characterization of the adaptation of Agatha Christie's novel, *And Then There Were None*, and its film adaptation. Ramdani et al use a descriptive qualitative method to review the data, focusing on the character and the characterization. This research gives the writer another perspective on film adaptation. Character changes are proven to be impactful to the narrative aspect of the story, where each character, especially the main character, plays a crucial role in advancing each part of the plot. The writer shall consider this

aspect when researching *Turtles All the Way Down* and its film adaptation later on; perhaps the result will also be influenced by the character and characterization aspects.

The last research the writer reviewed is an article in The Journal of Specialized Translation, which discusses film adaptation. Perdikaki wrote a paper entitled "*Film Adaptation as the Interface between Creative Translation and Cultural Transformation: The Case of Baz Luhrmann's The Great Gatsby (2013)*." The research shows that film adaptation is a form of creative translation. It transforms or transposes a narrative from one medium to another, particularly from a literary work into a film. This research focuses on the work *The Great Gatsby* and its film adaptation. From this paper, the writer has gained another perspective that adaptation is similar to translation, in that it transfers meaning between different cultures, but at the same time, it is highly context-based. Perdikaki demonstrates that by analyzing the film adaptation of *The Great Gatsby*, a classic narrative can be rewritten and modified to suit a modern context, while still addressing a contemporary issue. This research also introduces the writer to the terminology of the patronage concept in a film adaptation, which is a factor that regulates the flow of the narrative.

1.4 Research Questions

The writer proposes two research questions for this study, which include:

1. What are the narrative alterations between the novel '*Turtles All the Way Down*' (2017) and the 2024 movie adaptation?

2. How do the alterations affect the narrative of the novel ‘*Turtles All the Way Down*’ (2017)?

1.5 Scope of the Research

This research focuses on finding the narrative alterations between the novel *Turtles All the Way Down* (2017) by John Green and the movie adaptation by Hannah Marks in 2024. Therefore, the writer limited this research to two discussions. First, to examine the narrative alterations that occurred in the film adaptation of *Turtles All the Way Down*, and second, to find out how the alterations affect the narrative of the adapted literary work.

1.6 Objectives of The Study

This research has two objectives. The first objective is to identify the narrative alterations between the novel *Turtles All the Way Down* (2017) and its 2024 film adaptation. The second objective is to explore how the alterations impact the narrative of the novel *Turtles All the Way Down* (2017) when adapted into a film.

