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**FROM NOVEL INTO FILM: *ATONEMENT***

**MA Thesis**

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## ABSTRACT

The thesis aims to compare and analyze Ian McEwan's *Atonement* (2001) and its film adaptation with the same title directed by Joe Wright (2007). The novel has a complex narrative structure which allows the readers to experience how Briony, the narrator who is in the end turns out to be unreliable, constructs fiction in order to atone for her mistake: an unreliable narrator tells the reliable truth. The thesis aims to analyze the use, function and outcome of narration both in the novel and in the film. In order to attain the aim, this thesis sets out to investigate the aspects that have undergone changes during the process of adaptation as well as how these changes affect the outcome for the reader/viewer in each case. The thesis consists of the following parts: an introduction, two core chapters, and a conclusion. The introduction gives a brief summary of *Atonement* and explains why this novel has been chosen for the analysis.

The theoretical chapter consists of two parts. The first part provides an overview of narrative theory regarding the adaptations of literature into film. The second part presents Linda Hutcheon's theory of adaptation since it will be employed to provide a point of reference.

The second chapter of the thesis presents an empirical analysis of the novel, *Atonement*, and its film adaptation from the point of view of changes in narration. The thesis describes the narrative differences and similarities between both media by using the modes of engagement from Hutcheon's theory.

The conclusion summarizes the results of the thesis.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>ABSTRACT .....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>INTRODUCTION.....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>1. CHAPTER ONE .....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>1.1. Adaptation studies: Literature review .....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>1.2. Linda Hutcheon's <i>Theory of Adaptation</i>.....</b>	<b>17</b>
1.2.1. What to adapt? (The form) .....	19
1.2.2. Novel to film: Telling and showing modes .....	20
1.2.3. Adapters and adaptations: Motivation behind adaptation .....	21
1.2.4. How to adapt? (The Audiences) .....	24
1.2.5. Where and when does the adaptation take place? (The Contexts).....	25
<b>2. CHAPTER TWO .....</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>2.1. The narrative structure of <i>Atonement</i> and its film adaptation .....</b>	<b>27</b>
2.2. Atonement: From novel into film.....	30
2.3. Ambiguity in the novel, winning innocence in the film .....	32
2.4. The narrated truth is also truth .....	40
<b>3. CONCLUSION .....</b>	<b>41</b>
<b>REFERENCES .....</b>	<b>45</b>
<b>RESÜMEE .....</b>	<b>49</b>

## INTRODUCTION

The best-selling metafictional novel *Atonement* was written in 2001 by Ian McEwan, who is widely considered by literary critics to be one of the most important contemporary novelists of English literature (Wells 2010:11-12). For his works, McEwan has received various literary awards. *Atonement* is considered to be one of McEwan's best works and it was shortlisted for the 2001 Booker Prize for fiction.

My main reason for choosing this novel is a personal interest in both the novel, its film adaptation and in adaptation studies in general. From the plot of the novel, it can be inferred that *Atonement* with its complex narrative structure allows readers to experience how the narrator Briony becomes an unreliable narrator. In other words, McEwan introduces an unreliable narrator Briony, telling the reliable truth that enables her to construct her fiction within McEwan's fiction in order to atone for her mistake. The thesis aims to analyze the use, function and outcome of narration both in the novel and in the film.

In order to attain the aim, this thesis, sets out to investigate: the aspects that have undergone changes during the process of adaptation as well as how these changes affect the outcome for the reader/viewer in each case. For the methodology, I will follow narration in both medium by using Hutcheon's (2006) concept of the *telling* and *showing* modes since she provides a set of terminology, which is necessary to analyze the distinctive features of the narrative in the novel as well as in the film. I believe that exploring and comparing the use of narration in both media will provide an important insight into understanding the use, the function and the outcome of narration in both media.

The novel takes place over a longer period and in different settings. It is divided into three parts and a postscript; the first part of the novel is set in 1935 in England; the

second and third parts during and shortly after World War II. The last part of the book is the postscript set in 1999, the days around Briony's 77th birthday. The individual parts differ in style, composition and narrative structure.

The novel starts on a hot summer day in 1935 when the protagonist of the novel Briony, is thirteen years old girl with a passion to become a writer. In order to write her novel, Briony commits a mistake that ruins the lives of two people who are in love with each other: her sister Cecilia and house cleaner's son Robbie Turner. This imaginative girl, Briony witnesses a flirting between Cecilia and Robbie at the fountain but Robbie's warning by hand gesture to Cecilia causes her to misinterpret the entire event as a threat (McEwan 2001: 39). After this scene, Briony prefers to hold Robbie and Cecilia detain in her imaginative world, because she is confined within the boundaries of her imagination in order to write her own novel (Robinson 2008). The subsequent events, such as Robbie's first draft of a letter with a sexual implication and, on the same day, Cecilia and Robbie's consensual sexual encounter in the library, lead Briony to misinterpret the situations she has witnessed as a physical assault and comes into a conclusion that Robbie is a "maniac" (pg. 119).

On the same night, she accuses Robbie of raping her cousin Lola, although she has observed Lola's attacker, Paul Marshall, in the half-light. Because of her feelings toward Robbie, she is led to assume that he is the culprit (Bentley 2008: 150). By the time this scene comes up, Briony already has enough motivation to change the lives of these people to serve her own fantasy. She takes all the false interpretations of what happened between Robbie and Cecilia to an entirely new level. Briony's false accusation spoils Robbie and Cecilia's chance for happiness and sends the couple irrevocably spiraling away from each other. Once, she recognizes her mistake, she spends her life trying to atone for it.

In the second part of the novel, Cecilia becomes a nurse and cuts off her contacts with her family due to the part they have played in sending Robbie to jail. A day before evacuation, Robbie falls asleep remembering the past events, especially teaching Briony how to swim and Briony's childish declaration of love which now he links to the reason why Briony possibly accused him: "Drama by the river might have been enough to sustain her all that time" (pg. 233).

In the third part of the novel, Briony rejects the offer to study at Cambridge and instead trains to become a nurse in London to atone for her mistake. After attending Lola and Paul's wedding, Briony visits Cecilia and finds Robbie in her flat. They both decide to give her a chance to set things right. In spite of the fact that Paul, who is the real rapist, will not take responsibility for the crime because of the legal refuge that marriage to his victim affords him, Briony nevertheless promises to begin the judicial procedure against him. Robbie asks Briony to write a letter where she writes everything relevant to the case: "it needs to be long letter" (pg. 345). Robbie's word also signals that "writing can tell the truth" (Geraghty 2007: 103). This scene in the novel reminds the reader of the essential importance of fictionality and the significance of words for creating fiction.

The final part of the novel, readers are not allowed to understand how Briony, as the unreliable narrator that she is, has manipulated her audience because she is the "author" of the previous parts of the novel. Moreover, it is revealed that Cecilia and Robbie both died and Briony never visited them to make amends. As the author of the book, she wanted to give her characters a fictional happy ending, since they could not have spent the time together they longed for: "Who would want to believe that, they never met again, never fulfilled their love?" (pg. 371). In this way, Briony atones for what she has done to her sister and Robbie. I will be analyzing and comparing a series of scenes that are featured

both in the novel and the film. The scenes chosen bear importance regarding the narrative since these are the turning points or vehicles for the events that follow.

The thesis is divided into two chapters: the first chapter will provide a survey of an overview of narrative theory in literature and film. First, it will go on to differentiate between the novelistic and the cinematic ways of narrating and the problems and limitations involved in the process of adaptation. The second part of the first chapter will present Linda Hutcheon's theory of adaptation which belongs to the modern and significant directions in the discipline of adaptation.

The second chapter will introduce the narrative structure of the novel to show what narrative methods used and how the choice of the narrator influences the story. Furthermore, the thesis will look at the narration on its film adaptation.

The analysis will be based on the premise that in the novel, unreliable narrator Briony constructs fiction in order to atone for her mistake by telling the reliable truth in McEwan's novel. The film adaptation, in contrast, takes on a narration in a different medium. The thesis will show how this version removes some of the vagueness of the novel to make it easier to swallow for a possibly wider audience and brings the experience of the story closer to the viewer.

# 1. CHAPTER ONE

## 1.1. Adaptation studies: Literature review

Adaptation studies is a growing area in Arts and Humanities that has brought new critical attention to the practices of interpretation, translation and rewriting. Hutcheon (2006: 142) points out the difficulty in defining the term “adaptation” and suggests calling adaptation “repetition with difference”. According to her, change from a source text to the target text is unavoidable when we call a work an adaptation. In addition, she calls an adaptation “the adapter’s creative interpretation” and the “audience’s intertextuality” (Hutcheon 2006: 142). It implies that an adaptation needs to have extended intertextual engagement with the adapted work. Sanders (2006: 30) also defines an adaptation as an act of re-vision in itself and a way of a new interpretation of a source text. Similarly to Hutcheon, Sanders also shows adaptation and its intertextual purpose with an interpretation of re-reading of a canonical source text and its evolving production of meaning. This paper uses the definition suggested by Hutcheon.

The most common form of adaptation is the use of the novel as a source material of a film. When cinema began to perceive itself as an essentially narrative form of entertainment, it made much sense to adapt novels that shared this quality of narratability with the younger medium (McFarlane 1996: 15). McFarlane (1996: 36) says that besides being a way of entertainment, or a way of communication, a film owes its popularity and recognition to one thing, which it shares with the novel. The one thing is its narrative potency. Besides considering narrative potency, McFarlane (1996:15), says that filmmakers consider two more possible factors in film adaptation: the first factor would entail the cinema’s increasing reputation as an economic source of leisure activity, whereas the second would be the benefit from the prestige attributed to literary works. That is to



say, “majority of the commercial films based their stories on literary original works” (Andrew 1984: 98).

Some theorists such as McFarlane (1996), Bluestone (1957), Leitch (2008) share their different opinions on whether we should consider a film based on a novel as an individual work of art or as an adaptation of a specific source text. There is no doubt that when comparing film adaptations, especially films based on novels, much attention has been paid to the essential similarities and differences between the two media. However, far too little attention has been paid to narrative presented in both media; which aspects are applicable in a written form and which become considerable in a film version.

There are many contemporary studies supporting the idea that comparing the similarities and differences of a novel and its film adaptation cannot be an issue at all since we are talking about entirely different “text” types. Evaluating film’s faithfulness to its original source is useless, because the original text is always considered to be superior in the face of the adaptation (Leitch 2008: 68). Similar to Leitch, McFarlane (1996: 5-6) also points out that when the readers see the film version of a novel they have read, they neglect the potentials of the film version and they only focus on the differences between each medium. What he wants to say is that making a distinction between a novel and a film is not enough since changes might occur in the process of translating a text into a film (ibid). Therefore, instead of making a comparison between the original text and its film adaptation, it is important to focus on the possibilities and techniques specific to the screen. That is to say, these “texts” are ultimately different in the way of presenting their material with different manners. Chatman (1980: 451) says that each medium has its own characteristics which can be used in a better or a worse way in a film or in a novel.

Viewers and readers need to have the capability of grasping and respecting these limitations of a novel and a film (Chatman 1980: 451).

Some theorists, such as Chatman (1980), Bluestone (1957), Monaco (2000), and McFarlane (1996), differentiate between the narrative in the novelistic and the cinematic senses in the process of adaptation. Bluestone (1957: 2) says that both novels and films are independent media with different specific characteristics. According to Bluestone (1957: 1), literature and film are incompatible. This fact is evident especially in the linguistic nature of literature as opposed to the visual properties of the film (Bluestone 1957: 1). Bluestone (ibid) describes the two media as “two different ways of seeing”, one working through physical sight and based on the eyes of the spectator and the other established through the mind of the reader, which produces an imaginative fantasy. The word “image” is a link between the ways of “seeing” in novels and films but the way of presenting and perceiving these images varies. Elliott (2003: 136), on the other hand, says that studies of adaptations separates novels into words and films into images and adds that “designation of novels as words and films as images is neither empirically nor logically sustainable”. It follows that images used in films are also presented in novels and films are not entirely visual if we consider dialogues that consist of words (Elliott 2003: 136). Together, these arguments provide important insights into the understanding of different ways of seeing in both media.

As mentioned earlier, narrative is something that is shared by both novels and films. Monaco (2000: 36) says that films and novels share the same narrative capacity which is transferable. Due to this transferability, if one characterizes the potentials of narratives in novels, such as sequences of scenes, the links between the events, including characters, who are also affected by these events, it is undeniable that these might be

applied in the film (Monaco 2000: 36). However, the way of presenting these narrative aspects in the novel and in the film is different. Monaco (2000: 39) says that when we make a comparison between the same narrative given in a novel and in a film, it is easier to foreground important features related to each medium. To make a clear distinction between novel and film narratives, Monaco (2000: 39) adds that film narratives are shorter and have limited time that is why removing some scenes no matter how important they are to the literary work is necessary. However, these changes and cuts can be balanced and compensated by means of visual and auditory devices. For example, the pictorial advantage of a film renders some scenes with less effort than its verbal counterpart.

McFarlane (1996: 65-69) draws an important distinction between narrative and narration saying that the most characteristic feature that novels and films have in common is a “narrative”, whereas the manner of narration is not same. In order to narrate the story to the audience, the film uses many narrative techniques such as music and image which can powerfully shape the spectators’ apprehension (McFarlane 1996: 36). Chatman (1990: 38), on the other hand argues that films might have a visual advantage but it does not mean that there are no gaps in the process of adaptation. To make these gaps more clear, Chatman (1990: 75) puts emphasis on how descriptive techniques of novels and films are different, and says that the novels have detailed descriptions, which are not possible to adapt into a film. What he says is that writing about something requires many skills; for example, when a writer depicts an action of a character, we have enough details about the descriptions. The film on the other hand, is not able to provide this detailed description as much as novels can.

In contrast, Dagle (1980: 55) asserts that there is only one way for the literary author to convey visual description for the reader to see or hear. Whereas in film (s) the

audience is provided with more opportunities to see and hear things by means of shown gestures even without the intention and awareness of the filmmaker (Dagle 1980: 55). According to Torop (1999: 129), these moving images together with music and other sounds, such as speech or environmental “noise” make the narration difficult to follow in the film (Torop 1999: 129). In other words, analyzing a narration of the novel is easier than analyzing a narration of a film. What Torop (1999: 129) says is that, the narration in the novel is linear and stays consistent in sequencing which is easy to follow.

Further, Monaco (2000: 39) points out that the greatest difference between the narrative in the novel and in the film is that novels have narrators and authors and they can control words more powerfully with the use of language. In other words, literary narrative becomes more controlled and in the hands of the author in comparison with the scriptwriter (Monaco 2000: 42). That makes novels better equipped to respond to the challenging, complex and imaginative narratives than films are and to make the readers imagine and speculate what may be hidden under the given words (Monaco 2000:41). The scriptwriter is also capable of adapting the written words to a great effect but not with the same abundance and concrete determination as the author of written text. (Monaco 2000: 41)

Considering the narrative presented in the novel *Atonement*, it becomes obvious that language has a significant role in constructing fictional reality. In addition, “language is a useful way of creating reality” (Waugh 3). McEwan (2001) demonstrates the use postmodern technique creating fiction within fiction. According to Lyotard (1984), postmodernist narratives complicate the reality in fiction. In other words, the postmodern fiction questions to what extend the information they received from the narrator is real (McHale 1987: 38). According to Finney (2004: 70), parts one, two and three in *Atonement* tell the reader how the narrator, Briony, uses fiction in order to redeem herself for the

damage fiction has prompted her to cause, this being also a metafictional feature of the narrative. That is to say, *Atonement* with its metanarrative features common to postmodernist writing, makes the readers mistrust the reliability of the things they have read in the end of the novel. These aspects of the novel, however, are not considerably emphasized in the film adaptation.

In the following section, the ways of narrating in text and as well as in film will be introduced with the problems and limitations involved in the process of adaptation.

McFarlane puts more emphasis on the changes and differences in the process of adapting a novel into a film. He defines the term “adaptation” as “transfer” where the main elements of one medium can be carried over into another. McFarlane (1996: 23) differentiates the components that can be easily transferred from a novel to a film and components, which require a proper adaptation. According to McFarlane (1996: 23), it is the “story” what novels and film share and it is transferable: “The novel and film can share the same story, the same “raw material” ( McFarlane 1996: 23). For example, the function of the main characters such as, their ages and names in the novel and in the film, can be transferred in the same manner. Although the novel and the film share the same story, the director may apply different strategies in the “plot” of the film such as putting emphasis on different event sequences or altering the order of the events. The use of proper adaptation includes enunciation (McFarlane 1996: 23). The term, enunciation is defined in the dictionary of narratology as “detecting a discourse of the act” (Prince 2003: 26). For example, a way of writing and visual description of the places and persons might be a sign of enunciation in the novel (McFarlane 1996: 26).

While talking about the limitations involved in the process of adaptation, Chatman (1990: 162) says that the pleasure accompanying the reading of a novel is not the same as

the one related to watching a film. In other words, a film is not able to give us the same sense of pleasure as a novel does, but it can give a similarly valuable experience (ibid). As an example of a pleasure during reading a novel, Chatman (1990: 163) puts emphasis on the importance of imagination in the novel and says that the possibility of imagining events and descriptions is an essential characteristic of reading a novel. In other words, when we watch a film, this possibility disappears and we do not need to imagine in order to understand the face filled with emotions, thus they can be conveyed without a written explanation (ibid). According to Chatman (1990: 162), this unspoken visual description as well as imagination is less stimulated in films than in novels. The reason is simple, thus, the novels have deeper narrative level. The narrator can reveal more about himself or herself, however, the film cannot invoke the same tone. In other words, Chatman's (1990: 162) point is that in the film the camera decides what the viewers may or may not see.

Bordwell (1986: 82) says that we apprehend the world by means of narratives. The reason for mentioning Bordwell's theory is that his book *Narration in the Fiction Film* aims at understanding the process of film reception and how the textual narrative is represented in visual media. He (1986: 82) points out that the most important difference between the novel and the film is that the narrative of a novel is expressed in words, whereas the narrative of a film employs visuals. Based on preliminary notions introduced by Russian Formalists, Bordwell distinguishes between the story that is narrated and the way in which that story is narrated, the discourse. Hutcheon (1984) links the real representation of the story and the way of its narration with postmodern literature and suggests that in this way of postmodern fiction questions the reliability of the story in the narrated discourse.

Further, Chatman (1978: 19) makes a distinction between narrations in both media and shows the relationship between the *story* (what is told) and the *discourse* (the way it is told) in a film and a novel. There is a difference between the story that is represented and the act of narrating of it, the discourse. Chatman (1978) says that this distinction correlates with the distinction between the *fabula* and the *syuzhet*.

Taking his cue from the Russian literary theorists, Bordwell (1986: 83) links cinematic narration with the interaction of these two terms, *fabula* and *syuzhet*. The story is called *fabula*, while its narrative presentation is called *syuzhet*. The terms *story* and *fabula*, as well as their interaction is crucial for the understanding of the narrative construction and three principles of narrative logic, time, and space (Bordwell 1986: 83). Chatman (1990) in contrast argues that *syuzhet* and *fabula* and their interaction is not necessary to understand film narration because film narration depends on an agent who is responsible for creating interaction between viewers and the film. According to Bordwell (1986: 83), the novelistic narration can be discursive, which forms an integral part of the *syuzhet*, and the *style* has very prominent factor in the analysis of a narration. In a fiction film, on the other hand, *syuzhet* and *style* interact to channel the speactator's construction of *fabula*, which means that there is a relationship between us who watch the film and the narration of the film. Bordwell's research makes it clear to us what that relationship is like.

Prince (1987: 26) defines *fabula* as a set of narrated situations and events in their chronological sequence and a basic story material. According to Bordwell (1985: 44), *fabula* is a pattern which the perceivers of narratives create through assumptions and predictions. Bordwell (ibid) adds that in order to understand narrative, it is essential to grasp how the imaginative *fabula* is formed on account of being aware of the signs and clues created by the *syuzhet*, which is the dramaturgy of the film.

*Syuzhet* is a system which arranges story components into a specific order (Bordwell 1985: 44). That is to say, *syuzhet* allows the audience to produce the *fabula* in a certain way by arousing expectation, curiosity, and doubt at certain points rather than allowing us easily to produce a *fabula* (Bordwell 1985: 52). For instance, in the novel *Atonement* McEwan waits until the end of the book to provide readers with a shocking revelation about Briony's authorship of the novel within the novel itself, heightening the sense of readerly anticipation. The film *Atonement* is also a good example through which we can examine the relationship between *syuzhet* and *fabula* and in order to reveal the dynamics and principles of this narrative structure. For instance, in the fountain scene, when the imaginative girl Briony witnesses a moment of flirting between her older sister Cecilia and Robbie Turner, the viewers never know what Briony thinks of and predicts from the process.

Bordwell (1985: 58) says that the depth of narrative knowledge depends on the degree of subjectivity and objectivity, respectively. In other words, a narrative can represent the mental world of the character, or be content with what the viewer sees and hears (Bordwell 1985: 58). In the film *Atonement*, the camera scans around first at wide-angle and then at medium sizes, giving us the opportunity to witness the events. However, such a use of the camera makes it impossible for the audience to capture the perspectives of the characters. The sound track prevents us from hearing the dialogue by providing only the music. Thus, it can be concluded that *syuzhet* is a series of arranged clues that enable us to understand and unify the dramaturgy of the film narration and story knowledge. Bordwell (1985:53) notes that looking at the narrative as *fabula* and *syuzhet* makes us understand how the film narrative directs the audience by creating spaces and temporal gaps. That is to say, methods that *syuzhet* uses in forming the *fabula* have an important role in the narrative formation of the film.



The second part of the first chapter will deal with Hutcheon's *Theory of Adaptation* which belongs among seminal contributions to the discipline. Hutcheon's theory, with its modes of engagement, is particularly useful for the analysis of both the novel and the film versions of *Atonement*.

## 1.2. Linda Hutcheon's *Theory of Adaptation*

Over the last two decades, Hutcheon with other adaptation theorists, such as McFarlane (1996), Bluestone (2003), Stam (2000), Julie Sanders (2006), Leitch (2008), and Geraghty (2009), have provided a prominent contribution in the development of adaptation studies. Hutcheon not only analyzed the current state of the field of adaptation studies in detail, but she also she surveys the various forms of adaptation.

In her *Theory of Adaptation*, she puts more emphasis on the way of narrating in the book and in the film adaptation. This thesis will use Hutcheon's (2006) adaptation theory for comparing the novel *Atonement* and its film adaptation. I have chosen Hutcheon's theory for my analysis, since she attempts to show not only narrative strategies, but also the presentation of each medium.

One major theoretical issue that has dominated in the field of adaptation for many years concerns the fidelity of adaptation in order to value an adapted text. In other words, the widely accepted view for many years was that, if the adaptation is faithful to the source text, it is successful. Hutcheon in contrast, attempted to show this promise of fidelity as an obsolete issue. She was not alone in this attempt. Sanders (2006: 20) also supports the same point and says that "fidelity" is outdated term. According to Hutcheon (2006: 4), the adapted text and the adaptation are on the same level of importance because both are

considered independent works of art. In other words, “it is important to study an adaptation and its relationship with the prior texts without taking the fidelity issue as a starting point because each genre is unique with its own contribution” ( Hutcheon 2006: 4). Hutcheon (ibid) suggests that besides considering an adaptation to be an independent and creative work, it is important to define how successful an adaptation can be. Stam (2000: 55) says that due to the change of medium, adaptation has to be considered different and original from the source text.

Hutcheon (2006: 26) touches the problem of the definition of the term of adaptation and says that there is not a big difference between adaptation as a process and as a product. Hutcheon (2006: 7) deals with adaptation as the “process” and the “product” and introduces “three distinct but interrelated perspectives”. In order to be able to speak of an adaptation in qualitative terms, it is essential to know what we mean when we use the word “adaptation”.

Adaptation as a *product*, might be transferring specific work, such as novel to a film or long poems to a novel or making some changes in the context or frame (ibid). For example, the readers might have retold the same story with a new interpretation or with a different perspective (Hutcheon 2006: 27). The second term, on the other hand *a process of creation*, is defined by Hutcheon (2006: 27) as changing the form and giving a new interpretation to the adaptation or making it for one’s own use determined by the point of view. Sanders (2006: 19) introduces the parallel view and says: “Appropriation spreads far beyond the adaptation for other texts into new literary creation, as a part of both historical lives and events”. In addition, Hutcheon deals with the *process of reception* of adaptation and describes it, as a form encountering previous work running through our mind with echoing by replications with alterations (ibid). According to Hutcheon (2006: 28),

capability to adapt can also be determined as an initiating with compatibility, being able to make its own, at the same time others. Thus, Hutcheon's (2006: 28) theory shows that adaptation should be handled both in terms of creation and reception.

Hutcheon (2006: 30) moves on to answer the questions of *what* adapts (the form), *who* and *why* (adapters), and *how* (the audience) and *when* and *where* (the context), which are important questions to start understanding the process of adaptation. Each question deals with a detailed clarification of the process of adaptation and a necessity of analyzing which changes take place during the adaptation process and how these changes should be evaluated.

### **1.2.1. What to adapt? (The form)**

Hutcheon (2006: 55) puts an emphasis on the question of *what* (the form) to adapt and shows the process of transmission from the performance based on *telling*, such as novels, and other long and complex texts into a *showing* performance, such as films. According to Hutcheon (2006: 49), there are three modes of engagement with the audience, the *telling mode*, the *showing mode*, and the *interactive mode*. These modes play a crucial role in determining the kind of attraction the source text holds for its audience (Hutcheon 2006: 49). In this thesis, the *telling* and the *showing* modes will be examined in detail, since the *telling* mode of the novel *Atonement*, and the *showing* mode of its film adaptation is the main focus of this thesis. More importantly, analyzing these modes will provide an important opportunity to advance the understanding of the narrative structure in both media.

### 1.2.2. Novel to film: Telling and showing modes

Hutcheon (2006:42) points out that the *telling* mode is the most distinctive feature for the novels and short stories. If we now turn to the specific characteristics of the modes, it has to be admitted that there are some advantages of the *telling mode* which are not present in the *showing mode*. For instance, the most common feature of reading a novel is its strong imaginative power, whereas in the visual mode, this power is lost, instead, we rely on what the camera allows us to see (Chatman (1990: 163). In this mode, the reader's imagination is shaped by written words, and "visuals" are conveyed through and restricted by the very verballity of the literary medium (Hutcheon 2006: 23). However, when we move from the *telling mode* of print to the *showing mode* of film, we also move from the imagination to direct perception (Hutcheon 2006: 23). That is to say, film is usually said to perform the main elements of the novel. According to Stam (2000: 61), when we read a novel, we imagine the characters in our mind, the film by contrast selects a specific performer and we do not need to imagine the color of character's eyes.

Hutcheon (2006: 42) says that in a *telling* mode, readers have an opportunity to witness the characters' thoughts and feelings, whereas in the *showing* mode, viewers hear what is on the characters' mind, while also relying on the visuals. More interestingly, what showing mode can do and telling cannot do is enabling viewers to listen to the music and other soundtracks. Hutcheon (2006: 60) emphasizes the importance of music and soundtracks in films and adds that soundtracks in movies increase the response of the spectators to the characters and create emotional responses while linking inner and outer situations in a less obvious way than the camera work. That is to say, a soundtrack and music gives an additional value to the scenes. For example, in the film version of the *Atonement*, the opening scene is the most notable scene, introducing the viewer with the

clanging of keys on a typewriter. When the music engages with the sound the typewriter makes, we see Briony rushing around the house with the “script” of her play in her hand. In this scene, the importance of the sound effects comes through, because they help to create the atmosphere and Briony’s excitement palpable as she hurries to share her finished work with her mother.

In addition, Huthceon (2006: 42) asserts that films use music, visual images, and other media which provide the spectators with the possibility of receiving different perceptions; this diversity of media is the main strength of the *showing mode*. The use of stunning sound effects and diegetic and non-diegetic music also enable the audience to feel the deeper inside of a source text (Díez et al 1999: 206).

In the move from novel to film, adaptation must be dramatized (Hutcheon 2006: 59). In other words, the way of describing scenes, and characters transmitted into visuals, sounds or images. For example, the novel *Atonement*, is extremely wordy. However, the film heads in the opposite direction, showing the most of the big emotional scenes with a tense silence, such as fountain and library scenes are full of these moments (Robinson 2008). It shows that films also have a rich capacity and variety of techniques to describe inner experiences. Thus, it could be said that those two modes are different from each other not only in their specific restrictions, but also in their possibilities.

### **1.2.3. Adapters and adaptations: Motivation behind adaptation**

Hutcheon (2006: 77) starts the discussion by posing a question, “*Who is the adapter?*” and says that most of the time of the answer would be the writer. Hutcheon (2006: 77) elaborates on the discussion and states that there is a lot of teamwork behind

this process. It is not easy to say who is the real adapter due to multiple factors which contribute to this process. Hutcheon (2006: 77) presses the point further by saying that if we think about the importance of music in the film, most probably the composer of the music might be called an adapter. In this case, we have to call costume or set designers as adapters since the films would not be successful without their assistance (Hutcheon 2006: 77). In addition, another question might arise about whether the actors can be considered as adapters (ibid). There is no doubt that the actors have a serious responsibility when they perform famous literary characters. Hutcheon (2006: 78) concludes that it is usually the screenplay that begins the process.

What films adapt, in this sense, is the script (Stam 2005: 45). That is to say, before shaping a text for a new medium, someone needs to interpret it (Hutcheon 2006: 84). For this reason, Hutcheon's (2006: 85) study has shown that if we consider that fact that we tend to attribute "authorship" in literature to the writer or to composer (in music), then in case of adaptation, we similarly attribute the authorship to the film director and the screenwriter.

One issue that needs to be clarified is the reason behind adaptation. Hutcheon (2006: 85) explores the possible motives behind being an adapter, but also questions why someone would be eager to become an adapter while knowing that their work of art will be compared with the original source material. Thus, the choices behind the adaptation may be based on different factors such as, economic, legal, cultural, political, or personal motivation and intention. (Hutcheon 2006: 85)

Firstly, it would be useful to mention the *economic* reason, which is a significant motivation behind the adaptation process. Film industry is a big industry that is why it demands big capital (Bluestone 2003: 36). Films as well as other expensive forms of arts,

such as opera or music, always look for new ways to increase the number of the audience (ibid). In other words, they look for “safe belts with ready audience” (Hutcheon 2006: 87). Considering the popularity of a source is very important for an adapter as it makes more sense to put it into the screen and make sure that the readers will watch the film version (Hutcheon 2006: 87). Y’ Barbo says: “Novels by famous writers make lots of money, thus name alone may sell the film”. (cited in Hutcheon 2006: 88)

Secondly, it is a widely accepted view that when you want to use a pre-existing source as a basis of your own work, you should obtain the right to do so without a doubt. Hutcheon (200: 89) says that adaptation is called by the law a “derivative” work. In other words, from the perspective of law, adaptation takes the works of others and make some changes to it or recontextualizes it. However, in order to adapt anything, adapters need to get permission or have right to do so. (Hutcheon 2006: 91)

It is important to bear in mind the *cultural capital* motivation behind the adaptation process. Hutcheon (2006: 92) says that not only films take advantage of the popularity of novels; novels may also want to benefit from their adapted works’ cultural prestige. For example, educational institutions are the biggest markets since they are dedicated to helping the students and teachers to attract the students watching the film version of the novel they have read in order to appeal cinematic imagination of students and make “the most of” the adaptations. (Hutcheon 2006: 92)

Finally, yet importantly, *personal and political* motives have to be mentioned. It is unquestionable that personal and political motives play a crucial role in deciding to create an adaptation. According to Hutcheon (2006: 92), an adaptation is not only about making some changes in an adapted work but also showing personal attitude towards it. Furthermore, Hutcheon (2006: 130) says that the answer to the question “Why to adapt?”

varies according to who is the adapter giving the answer is. For example, the screen adaptation of *Atonement*, regarding the novel's complex narrative structure in particular, seemed as nearly impossible feat to pull off. Wright (2017) says that he wanted to adapt the novel, *Atonement* for the screen without any frame: "The reason behind choice of *Atonement* was to make spectators of the film feel the same shock as the readers of the book felt and to demonstrate how well an adaptation can work". It needs to be concluded that all the reasons behind the process of adaptation play a vital role for the adapters.

#### **1.2.4. How to adapt? (The Audiences)**

The audiences and their reactions to the adaptation has a crucial importance in the study of adaptation. When we turn to the question of "How to adapt?", it is necessary to mention the pleasure of adaptation for the audience since they react differently to different media. Hutcheon (2006: 113) emphasizes how much pleasure children get from listening to the same music or reading the same stories repeatedly. She stresses the pleasure of hearing or reading familiar music or a novel, we like with in a different or slightly in a new way (Hutcheon 2006: 113). The target audience does play a significant role in the process of adaptation that is why interpretations vary according to their "knowingness" (Hutcheon 2006: 139). This means that, the reaction and commentaries vary from people who are familiar with the literary work (the knowing audience) to people who are not familiar with the work (the unknowing audience). Hutcheon (2006: 121) points out that: "the adaptation may be successful for its own right but it has to be like that for its knowing and unknowing audience". Thus knowing the audience may assess the literary work in a particular way since their expectations are higher from the adapted work (ibid). It means that when knowing the audience is aware of the adapted work the experience is different since they



have a better comprehension of the quality of the work and it is easier for them to fill in the gaps by their pre-existing knowledge. Leitch (2008) says that “to know adaptation also means to unknow”. Thus, commentaries not only very for knowing and unknowing audiences but also feeling, unfeeling, amateur or half-knowing audience react differently to the adaptation.

When shifting from the *telling* to the *showing* mode, characters and places we imagined find their embodiments in the performance and our imagination is shaped by visual effects and other techniques of the films (Hutcheon 2006: 120). When the readers see the film version of a novel they have read, they disregard the capabilities of the film version and they only focus on the differences between each medium (McFarlane 1996: 5-6). Since the knowing audiences have expectations from the adapted work, any kind of change may cause them either disappointment or a big surprise (Hutcheon 2006: 120). However, without pre-existing knowledge the spectators do not evaluate the film as an adaptation at all; instead, they perceive it as a new simple film (Hutcheon 2006: 147).

### **1.2.5. Where and when does the adaptation take place? (The Contexts)**

According to Hutcheon (2006: 161), “adaptation and the work that adapted has to be framed in a context which involves time and a place, a society, and a culture”.

Furthermore, Hutcheon (2006: 161) emphasizes that the awareness of context plays an important role and has a great influence on receiving the adapted text. By taking this reception into account; adapters always make changes on the time of the story up to date in order to meet the expectation of the audience (Hutcheon 2006: 162). Similarly, Vermeer (2000: 238) puts more emphasis on the target culture. He introduced *skopos* (purpose)

theory and elaborated the aims of the translation process. According to him, while translating a literary source text into a new context, the translators should consider the *skopos* or the purpose of such transfer (Vermeer 2000: 238). In other words, they should interpret it according to the target culture's values and norms in order for it to function in the new environment.

Considering the above mentioned questions and their answers, it is obvious that Hutcheon provides an important appreciation to comprehend the importance of the motivation, pleasure and the context behind the process of adaptation.

In the following part of the thesis, I will use the question “what” in detail for my analysis since the question deals with the modes of engagement applicable to each medium. The thesis will proceed with examining and comparing the narrative structure of the *telling* mode of the novel, *Atonement* and the *showing* mode of its film adaptation in the selected scenes. This comparison will enable following the narration in both media and examine what happens when a written text is transferred into a form of media that makes use of visual and auditory channels; I will also study what is added in the film and what are the similarities and differences regarding the result in each case. The scenes are selected especially from the first part of *Atonement*, since time is stretched out there, allowing room for every detail. The fateful events that shape the rest of the novel take place also in the first part.

## 2. CHAPTER TWO

### 2.1. The narrative structure of *Atonement* and its film adaptation

Hereby, the thesis will start exploring the complex narrative structure of the novel *Atonement* to show which narrative devices and elements are used. The novel is composed of three parts and a postscript, spanning more than sixty years. The first part is set on a hot summer day in 1935 when Briony is thirteen years old, the second and third during and shortly after World War II. The last part is the postscript set in the days around Briony's 77th birthday. The first part constitutes fourteen numbered chapters and the events take place in only one day and they are narrated by a third-person narrator. This choice to employ a seemingly and omniscient narrator, a narrator who knows everything about the events around her, deliberately places a strong emphasis on the act of narration as the only eternal dimension (Prince 1987: 68). The second and third parts relate what happened over the course of a few years while zooming in on specific events.

Literature and constructing fiction are the crucial aspects in this novel. McEwan employs metanarrative devices by introducing a character of Briony to explore the process of writing fiction from the beginning to the end of the novel and enables the readers to explore life as a text and grasp the importance of imagination in our lives. Finney (2004: 69) argues that Briony's keen interest is not only about writing fiction. Her need for constructing a narrative through the events happening around her is also very significant metafictional element in the novel. (Finney 2004: 69)

Another important characteristic that makes the novel metafictional occurs when readers realize that the story is presented from the point of view of an unreliable narrator. Thus, Briony, as a fictional character appears to be the author of the entire book. In other

words, Briony uses the narrative technique of stream of consciousness in the novel. A technique which is a kind of interior monologue trying to give a “direct quotation of the mind” (Bowling 1950). By using this technique, Briony makes her readers feel confused about the things they have read when they finish reading the novel. For instance, at the end of novel, when she confesses that she spent a lot of time writing and rewriting the events that took place, stating: “I’ve regarded it as my duty to disguise nothing” (pg. 369), the reader again feels the atmosphere of unreality and how the reading is controlled by an unreliable narrator. In addition, this aspect of the novel *Atonement* is considered as a postmodern feature of the novel for some reviewers.

Thus, upon reading the novel, the reader gets the idea that in the first and the second part the point of view is shifting between Briony, Cecilia and Robbie. In the final part of the novel, however, it is revealed that all the parts are constructed by Briony, and they serve her own fantasy, a technique employed in postmodernist literature. By introducing Briony through her youthful playwriting, it places her at the center of the storytelling. However, describing her through a third-person narrator makes the identification of her as the narrator hard to detect from the beginning.

Finney (2004: 69) argues that from the beginning of the novel, readers are aware of how the events are fictionalized, and that is why it is not surprising to learn that Briony is the author of the previous pages. In other words, in postmodernist narrative fiction it is possible for the characters to be aware of their own fictionality but the degree of this character’s awareness of the situation can vary from case to case (McHale 1987: 121). That means they may hear their author’s voice with or without recognizing it (ibid). For instance, in the first part of the novel, the narrator Briony is also conscious of her own

fictionality when she writes: “Within an hour Briony would commit her crime” (pg. 156). It is proof of being aware of her own fictionality.

The use of language plays a significant role surpassing the reality of everyday life (Berger et al 1966: 37). In other words, language is the main mediator of creating the reality (Hutcheon 1984: 55). The power of language has an important role in the novel *Atonement*. In other words, when the final pages turn the story upside down, it is no longer wholly apparent what is the truth and what has been made up for the readers. Thus, the use of language overshadows the reliability of the story (Berger et al 1966: 37). On the one hand, knowing that Briony is a person describing herself remorsefully in hindsight, the reader might expect either more harshness or sympathy with her. On the other hand, the description of Briony in the novel refrains from either, thereby making it easy to trust that this is a true account of the events she narrated (Robinson 2008). Since literary writing is made up of language, it might be considered “a useful way of exploring the creating of ‘reality’ itself” (Waugh 2002: 92).

McHale (1987:129) also points out the similar idea and says that the postmodern fiction mirrors the reality. For example, in *Atonement*, this idea seems to apply mainly to the second and third part of the novel where Briony confesses that she made up the story, unlike the first part. It presents Cecilia and Robbie’s perspectives as well as Briony’s own and that of Emilia Tallis, the mother. Nevertheless, if Briony is the author of this section, these perspectives are as much imagined as the meeting in Cecilia’s flat.

Briony as an author fills in the gaps between the events she witnesses, and though the love story is convincing, it must have been made of only three real events: Cecilia and Robbie by the fountain, Robbie’s letter, and the sex scene in the library. In other words, these detailed descriptions of the events in the first section, are vital for the creation of the

rest of the story and therefore must be considered “real”. What happened between these scenes should be still considered unknown to some extent. We are not presented with the version Briony imagined when she was thirteen, but the version she imagined in hindsight to atone for claiming the truth she did not own.

In the end of the novel, the narrator Briony begins her revelation with the words, “There was a crime. But there were also the lovers” (pg. 370). Providing the love story to make amends for her crime is critical in understanding the title of the novel. Briony atones for her crime by telling a story she deems more hopeful and satisfying than the real events would be. This replacement means that in some cases, the purpose of the stories in general is not to stay as close to the truth as possible, but rather to narrate a good story.

Looking back at the narrative structure of *Atonement*, questions such as “What really happened?”, and “Is penitence the fuel for all writing?” arise in the readers since it is impossible for the reader to extricate the truth from fiction. At the end of the novel, Briony answers the question unyieldingly: “The lovers survive and flourish” (pg. 371), bringing with her answer a layer of metafictional truth in which the power of a story surpasses the power of the truth.

Based upon the examples mentioned, it has to be said that the novel employs both postmodernist and classic narrative themes and strategies and therefore, it is considered both realist and postmodernist novel with various perceptions, truths and illusions.

## **2.2. Atonement: From novel into film**

As the novel opens, the reader is introduced to Briony as a thirteen- year old girl with a passion and talent for writing. Moreover, she is described: “one of those children

possessed by a desire to have the world just so,” portraying her as a controlling girl who deeply cares about details and words and who wants praise for being like that (pg.4). In other words, as an imaginative child, Briony creates meticulous alternative worlds by changing other character’s lives in order to write her own fiction (Robinson 2008).

The power of literature and constructing fiction in fiction is the main topic in the novel from the beginning to the end. Jensen (2011: 10) emphasizes the religious references in *Atonement* and links them to the power of literature. By introducing Briony’s keen interest in what it is like to be someone different, McEwan (2001) seems to contribute to this notion by collecting what seems like several perspectives instead of one ‘objective’ narrative. He tries to tell its importance in the novel: “Imagining what it is like to be someone other than yourself is at the core of our humanity” (McEwan 2001). This way, McEwan moves around the problem of several individual truths by bringing up questions about sin and morality and answering them in the realm of literature. As a self-proclaimed atheist, McEwan’s writing attempts to fill in some holes he thinks Christianity has left gaping. “How can a novelist achieve atonement when, with her absolute power of deciding outcomes, she is also God? No atonement for God, or novelist, even if they are atheists” (pg. 371). McHale (1987: 210) says that there is an analogy between the author and the God. In other words, in order to show their superiority as authors, the postmodern writers use fiction (McHale 1987: 210). Jensen (2011: 10) argues that according to the postmodernist ethos, a sin can be compensated for by fiction because fiction is the only dimension we have for eternal truths today. Briony and her way of making amends by showing her superiority as an author is a good example of seeing how she atones for her mistake by writing fiction.

The postmodernist perspective also entails a lack of a master narrative, which means that seeking eternal truths in fiction is often a fruitless game (Lyotard 1984: 271). “Postmodern Realism aims to write the real, but ... the real itself has become an unconventional new world, mediated reality” (Elias 1993: 26). Ellam (2009: 23) says that by introducing the character Briony, McEwan warns the readers not to trust the author (McEwan or Briony), as well as alerting the dangers of the literary imagination. Thus, it could be concluded that the novel *Atonement* shows its concern about how reality has been trumped by imagination and fiction with many illustrations.

### **2.3. Ambiguity in the novel, winning innocence in the film**

McFarlane (1996: 23) points to major problems with adaptation theory and emphasizes the various changes and differences involved in the process of *telling* and *showing modes*. According to him (1996:13), a novel’s different narrative characteristics, such as the narrative point of view, omniscience and self-consciousness, are not easy to transfer in the screen (ibid). That is why in film adaptation, these modes can be omitted or used with equivalences (McFarlane 1996: 13). Hutcheon (2006: 161) argues that multiple changes in the process of adaptation are especially made to meet the expectations of the audience and for the purposes of the reception of context. Filmmakers have to meet the imagination of the readers and spectators when they watch a film. That is why matching the description of a certain era on the screen with the atmosphere and, the appearances of the characters with their costumes are not as easy as they look (Hutcheon 2006: 161). Chatman (1990: 162) says: “Although visual imagination is not as strong in the film as it is in the novel, the conceptual imagination might be balanced by means of emotions, which go unexplained by dialogue...”.



When shifting from the *telling mode* of a novel to the *showing mode* of a film, it is inevitable to dramatize the various novelistic features (Hutcheon 2003: 40). These might be the physical descriptions of characters and their thoughts. They are converted into speech, gestures, and visual images on the screen. In the case of *Atonement*, it is evident that the filmmaker, Wright (2007), stayed faithful to the plot of the novel, but he tightened it in a way that would dramatize Briony's mistake as something resulting from an act of youthful innocence, while leaving no room for other interpretations, such as the novel's main topic of constructing a fiction. It is natural because of the length or the differences of both media and more generally for commercial reasons that a film adaptation needs to leave out some things.

While the film does leave out or change some aspects of the novel, the thesis starts out by looking at how it achieves a similar level of foreshadowing with Briony as the narrator using cinematic rather than literary techniques.

First, the thesis will elaborate the additions in the film that give an extra value to the scenes. The film narration is composed of several factors such as lighting, music, camera movement, etc. One of the most important additions in the film is the use of music. The use of strong visuals, stunning sound effects, and diegetic and non-diegetic music enable the audience to feel deeper inside a source text (Díez et al 1999: 206). Hutcheon (2006: 60) also emphasizes the importance of music and soundtracks in films and says that soundtracks in films boost the response of spectators to the characters and create emotional responses while linking inner and outer situations in a less obvious way than camera work does. The film *Atonement* relies heavily on sound effects that the novel cannot use.

The distinguishing characteristic of Wright's film is the Dario Marianelli's soundtrack (Basu 2018). Where the novel is wordy, thick and complex to a labyrinthine

degree, the film is tensely silent while giving more emphasis on the creation of an experience of an intense romance with breathtaking images and long wordless pauses (Robinson 2008). In other words, music aids to strengthen the emotional moments and enhances the atmosphere in the film with a great effect.

In addition, music plays a significant role in the film, whenever an important transition is happening. In other words, it allows the spectators to perceive the sequence of events easily. For example, typewriter music is frequently played in the film *Atonement*. The opening scene is most notably introduced by the rhythmic clanging of keys on a typewriter to present Briony as a writer.

Another scene that is introduced by a typewriter sounds occurs in Robbie's letter writing scene when Robbie decides to write an apology letter to Cecilia. The open page of *Anatomy* causes him to express his sexual desire towards her instead of an apology (pg.85). He tries to ease the tension with Puccini's "O Soave Fanciulla" music but the typewriter sound creates a tension in the room. As a result of this tension, Robbie puts the wrong letter in an envelope, the one with sexual implication, and hands it to Briony.

Now, the thesis will analyze and compare the selected scenes from the novel and the film to discuss the possibilities and limitations in each mode of narration. The chosen scenes play an important role in understanding the use and the importance of narrative differences in both media. The scenes are selected especially from the first part since the fateful events that shape the rest of the novel take place also in the first, such as the fountain, letter and library scenes.

In the novel Briony as a character is described as someone who wants to control everybody and to be praised by others, which is difficult to show in the film. "She was one of those children possessed by a desire to have the world just so" (pg. 4). That is to say, the

*telling mode* of the novel, describes Briony who witnesses the world around her as a template for her stories and the people in it as her characters in order to construct her fiction. Even in the beginning of the novel, Briony's controlling behavior is very obvious when she is finishing the text of her play, *The Trials of Arabella*, and presenting it anxiously to her mother (pg. 3). These sequences of scenes place her again at the center of the process of storytelling, and her controlling nature is revealed when she is directing the play, though only vaguely as she is overshadowed by Lola.

Briony was always praised and supported by her mother and the people around her but when Lola wants to play Arabella in the play, Briony loses her authority and is in need of a new story to put herself at the center. In the *telling mode* of the novel, when Briony lets Lola be Arabella, we read Briony confronting someone for the first time in her well-protected life (pg. 15). Nevertheless, she tries to take control over her cousins and direct her own play even though she lets Lola be Arabella. In the *showing mode* of the film, on the other hand, this controlling desire is overshadowed and her character is presented as naive and innocent. That is to say, the unspoken visual description as well as imagination in the film is less stimulated in films than in novels (Chatman 1990: 162). When we watch Briony in this scene relying on her gestures is not enough to perceive her inner thoughts, the humor she had towards Lola and her desire to impress everybody around her with her play.

The second important scene that needs to be elaborated on occurs when Briony witnesses a filtrating between Cecilia and Robbie at the fountain. There are many nuances to the ways in which the characters interact with each other in the novel, which are ultimately derived from Briony's mind, as happens also in the fountain scene. The whole reason why Briony seems to be interested in literature and telling stories is because,

“Nothing in her life was sufficiently interesting or shameful to merit hiding” (pg. 5) and, it must be presumed that, she will have to make something up instead. That is why from the start, her powerful imagination leads her to confuse the real with the fictive (Finney 2004: 78). The novel leads to the realization that people constantly misinterpret each other, and it is never possible to guess what motives other people have. For example, in the fountain scene, Robbie’s warning hand gesture at Cecilia causes Briony to misinterpret the entire event as a threat and she says: “What a strong power did he have over her” (pg.38).

Because Briony is confined within the boundaries of her own imagination that she has, to write her own novel, she preferred to hold Robbie and Cecilia detained in her imaginative world instead of asking her sister the reason of being half-naked by the fountain (Robinson 2008). In the film, in contrast, we see Briony who is placed at a window looking at the scene from above and afar. The window symbolizes a frame and is a representation of Briony’s perspective. Briony is clearly a spectator of this scene but also acts as a frame of the scene, the narrator. After the scene is shown from Briony’s perspective, it is replayed from the main characters’ Cecilia and Robbie’s, point of view as they perform a dialogue impossible for Briony to hear. At the end of the scene, up close, however, the same shot of Briony in the window is shown presenting the scene as the product of Briony’s view, which is perfectly in line with the novel’s way of presenting her as the narrator and restoring the original sequencing of events. Hutcheon (2006: 42) says that the use of music and camera can give spectators the possibility of perceiving different perceptions, which is the main strength of the showing mode. In other words, by means of camera angles, it is possible for the spectators to perceive different things at the same time through gestures and music.

However, getting to see their inner thoughts is not as easy in the film as it is in the novel even with the help of music or camera. This imagination of the readers is hard to achieve on screen, since film is working with camera not language and lacks rendering the fictional mental world of the characters. In the film, for example, using camera in the fountain scene is not enough to allow the spectators to get the characters' inner thoughts. As Hutcheon (2006: 40) says, in the *telling mode* of the novel, the reader's imagination is formed by means of carefully chosen and controlled words. In the film, however, in order to understand the characters' thoughts we have to imagine what they have in their mind by means of gestures and music.

In the novel, the fountain scene is presented from all three perspectives: Briony's, Cecilia's, and Robbie's. More importantly, Briony's strong desire to start writing the same scene three times over by using three perspectives begun after this scene (pg. 40). The film, on the other hand is not able to explain the inner thoughts of the characters and show Briony's strong desire to create fiction. Instead, the film bypasses characters and their minds (Robinson 2008). The *telling mode* takes the readers inside the characters, whereas the showing mode shows us only exteriors, which means that without getting into the minds of characters, the spectators lose the chance to know the importance of the characters' inner worlds (Hutcheon 2006: 58).

In the move from the novel to the film, adaptation must be dramatized (Hutcheon 2006: 59). In the case of the film *Atonement*, Joe Wright prefers to dramatize Briony's character as innocent and naïve in comparison with the novel (Robinson 2008). Her feelings towards Robbie are given a more central role in her decision-making. In the second part of the novel, Robbie while remembering the past events, especially teaching Briony how to swim and Briony's jumping into the river for him to save her, which

follows her childish declaration of love, links to Briony's possible reason for accusing him (McEwan 2001: 233). This scene paints her character as more scheming and it is told from Robbie's perspective in the novel. In the film, it is shown as an essential motive for Briony's action, while it is only one of many in the novel.

Another significant change between the novel and the film occurs in the end. Until the final pages of the novel, readers are not allowed to understand how the unreliable narrator, Briony, has manipulated the readers. Thus, the postscript in *Atonement* could have been a simple yet powerful story about a couple torn apart by this adolescent girl's jealous accusations. The postscript is the fourth section, titled- "London 1999" and the readers learn that Briony is 77 and dying of vascular dementia, which causes her to lose her memory, gradually making her unable to write (pg. 354).

In addition, the reader learns that Briony is the author of the previous parts of the novel and that Cecilia and Robbie are together and happy, although they were not. Thus, it is revealed that they both died, and Briony never visited them to make amends. Briony wanted to give her characters a fictional happy ending, since they could not have had the time together they longed for in real life. This way, she wants to atone for what she has done to her sister and Robbie.

In the film, on the other hand, Briony's a way of unmasking herself as the inventor of the love story is perhaps a little different from the novel, but the message is the same. In the film, Briony's revelation occurs in a television show where she says: "I had for a very long time decided to tell the absolute truth. No rhymes, no embellishments," with the following afterthought: "You see, I couldn't any longer imagine what purpose could be served by it. "By honesty?" "Yes, by honesty. Or reality" (Wright 2007). This cinematic

ending brings back the question of truth and reality from the novel but again overshadows the novel's main purpose, which is very significant from the beginning.

Moreover, in the end of the novel, we have enough details about the characters and their lives, especially Paul and Lola. We read about Briony's progress in her career and her preparation to attend her birthday party in her own childhood home, where her relatives finally perform *Trials of Arabella*, which was written by her when she was a child. Her confession about Robbie and Cecilia takes place when she is alone at home at her writing desk (Robinson 2008). She is thinking about her last novel the one that should have been the first: "There was a crime- Lola's, Marshall's and mine- and I regarded it as my duty to disguise nothing- the names, the places, the exact circumstances" (pg. 369). She also confesses that the book could never have been published while Lola and Paul were alive. That is to say, Briony as a character is even in the end of the novel, introduced as someone who takes more care of her novel and desires to construct narrative fiction.

According to Torop (1999: 129), analyzing the narration of the novel is easier than the narration of the film because the narration in the novel remains stable in its sequencing written form, whereas in film, the image is supported by moving series together with the music which makes it difficult to follow. In terms of the narrative structure of the novel *Atonement*, I would support the opposite idea because, there is more ambiguity, anguish, and self-consciousness in the long passages of the novel, which make the narrative complex. While the novel takes detours to explore the corners of the human mind in detail, the film stays close to the plot, gives us a direct experience, showing Briony as a naïve child, who misunderstands adult life, makes a mistake, and tries to atone for the damage. Not only does the film leave out the central question of the novel: "what it is like to be

someone different”, but also Briony’s aim to construct fiction, which is sidelined in the film. She utters it in the film, but its significance is not as largely expanded as in the novel.

#### **2.4. The narrated truth is also truth**

To sum up, the use of narration in the novel *Atonement* reveals the most important feature of the novel, which is the emphasis on the power of words to create multiple truths and shape reality. For the protagonist of the novel, Briony, literature has a crucial role and her fantasy and fiction leads her to construct a narrative fiction within a novel. The film, in contrast does not bring any emphasis on this aspect, but does offer the same points on storytelling as if it was a gift of life. As Geraghty (2009:103) says “writing can tell the truth in a way that cinema cannot”. Briony’s keen interest in what is it like to be someone else makes her fill in the gaps of human experience (as she observes it) with her imagination, but she is also relying heavily on her own feelings and desires to be taken seriously and she does not distinguish between what is right and wrong. For this, she punishes herself for the rest of her life, and finds atonement only in her own imagination that brought about the sin in the first place and uses it to write her fiction.



### 3. CONCLUSION

The *Atonement* (2001) by McEwan and its film adaptation directed by Joe Wright (2007) are both great works in their own right. Considering its complex narrative structure, the novel *Atonement* seems challenging to be adapted to the screen. Wright (2007) wanted to adapt the novel to screen by staying faithful to the plot and giving the viewers a shocking experience similar to the one that the readers had at the end of the novel. McFarlane (1996: 23) says it is the “plot” that novels and film share, and is easily transferable. Although the novel and the film share the same story, the director may apply different strategies in plot, such as putting emphasis on various events or changing the sequence of the events.

The thesis aimed to analyze the use, function and outcome of narration both in the novel and in the film. In order to attain the aim, this thesis, set out to investigate: the aspects that have undergone changes during the process of adaptation as well as how these changes affect the outcome for the reader/viewer in each case. The analysis is based on the premise that the most important aspect of the novel; how the unreliable narrator Briony constructs fiction in order to atone for her mistake by telling the reliable truth is not the aspect that gets emphasized in the film. The film adaptation, of course, takes on the narration in a different medium with different possibilities. The thesis showed how the film version removes some of the vagueness bringing the experience of the story closer to the viewer thus to make it easier to follow for a possibly wider audience.

While adapting the novel *Atonement* to the screen, Wright tightened the plot of the novel to give the viewers a direct experience. In other words, the parts one, two, and three of the novel tell the reader how McEwan (2001) introduces the narrator, Briony, as someone who uses fiction in order to redeem herself for the damage, that fiction has

prompted her to cause (Finney 2004: 70). Thesis represented the view that Wright (2007) dramatized Briony's mistake as something caused by an act of youthful innocence and misunderstanding of the adult world and her feelings towards Robbie to be central role for making the decision.

The thesis provided a brief synopsis of the novel *Atonement* and explained the motivation for choosing this book for the research in the introduction part. What followed was a theoretical framework of adaptation studies in the first chapter of the thesis. First, the term adaptation was defined and then the issues related to the narrative discourse and narrative techniques in the novel and in the film were introduced.

In order to follow the narration in both media, thesis applied Hutcheon's (2006) concept of the *telling* and the *showing* modes. This analysis enabled to find out that the *telling mode* of the novel has a strong imaginative power, whereas in the *showing mode* this power is lost, instead, we rely on what the camera lets us see (Chatman 1990: 163). Besides, novels have challenging and complex narratives in order to make the readers imagine and speculate what might be hidden in given words (Monaco 2000:41). This advantage of a textual narrative is lost in the film since films are not able to create the clues that the novels develop in their narration and give viewers a direct experience (Monaco 2000: 42).

Next, thesis moved on to answer the questions of *what* adapts (the form), *who* and *why* (adapters), *how* (the audience), *when* and *where* (the context), which are questions important for the present study. These provided a detailed clarification of the process of adaptation and show what changes take place during the adaptation process and how these changes should be evaluated.

In the second chapter of the thesis, the narrative structure of the novel *Atonement* and its film adaptation explored in order to show which narrative devices and elements are used. The most obvious metanarrative device employed by McEwan introduces the character of Briony to explore the process of constructing fiction from the beginning to the end of the novel. Briony, a fictional character, appears to be the author of the entire book at the end of the novel thus, it questioning the reliability of the story for the readers.

This metanarrative aspect of the novel *Atonement*, is also considered to be postmodern feature of the novel by some reviewers. The choice of a third person narrator makes the identification of Briony as being the author of novel hard to reveal throughout the reading process. Finney (2004: 69) in contrast argues that from the beginning of the novel, the readers are aware of how the events are fictionalized, and that is why it is not surprising to learn that Briony is the author of the preceding pages. The thesis supported the view that the narrator Briony is conscious of her own fictionality. She writes: “Within an hour Briony would commit her crime” (pg. 156), providing proof of being aware of her own fictionality.

Moreover, the power of language and the importance of words to tell the truth in the novel were emphasized. Thus, language plays a significant role surpassing the reality of everyday life (Berger et al 1966: 37). With the use of examples, the thesis illustrated that when the final pages turn the story upside down, it is no longer wholly apparent what is the truth and what has been made up for the readers.

Then, the thesis moved on to the comparison between the novel *Atonement* and its film adaptation. To elaborate on what happens when a written text is transferred into a form of media that makes the use of visual and auditory channels, what are added in the film and what are the similarities and differences between both media. In order to

differentiate between the novelistic and the cinematic ways of narrating, thesis elaborated on the way of narrating in both media by analyzing and comparing the distinctive features of the *telling* mode and the *showing* mode of the adaptation from Hutcheon's concept.

First, the importance of music and soundtracks in a film was mentioned. The study showed that music is the most important addition to the film. It boosts the response of spectators to the characters and creates emotional responses while linking inner and outer situations in a less obvious way than camera work does (Hutcheon 2006: 60). In addition, music helps to present the character of Briony as a writer with rhythmic clanging of keys on a typewriter. Besides, it allows the viewers to perceive the transitions between the scenes. Finally, thesis analyzed and compared the selected scenes from the novel and the film. The chosen scenes play an important role in grasping the narrative differences in both media.

The most obvious finding that emerged from this study was that the narration in the *telling* mode of the novel and the *showing* mode of its film adaptation differ from each other by their possibilities and limitations. The thesis showed that the main difference between the narrations in both media is that for Briony literature plays a significant role and her fantasy and fiction leads her to construct narrative fiction within the novel.

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## RESÜMEE

TARTU ÜLIKOOL

ANGLISTIKA OSAKOND

**Ilaha Bakhshaliyeva**

**From Novel Into Film: *Atonement***

***Romaanist filmiks: "Atonement"***

Magistritöö

**2020**

Lehekülgede arv: 52

### **Annotatsioon:**

Ian McEwani 2001. aastal ilmunud romaan „Lepitus“ ja selle ekraniseering, mis jõudis kinolinadele 2007. aastal, on märkimisväärsed teosed. „Lepituse“ ekraniseering pälvis 80. Oscari auhinnagalal kuldmeikese. Lisaks sellele nomineeriti film auhindadele kuues erinevas kategoorias. Muuhulgas peetakse „Lepitust“ McEwani üheks parimaks teoseks ja 2001. aastal kandideeris see ka Bookeri auhinnale ilukirjanduse kategoorias.

Käesoleva magistritöö eemärk on analüüsida narratiivi kasutamist romaanis ja filmis selgitamaks, mis muutub, kui raamatu põhjal valmib film ning kuidas mõjutavad need muutused lõpptulemust vaataja jaoks. Narratiivi uurimiseks on töös nii raamatu kui ka filmi puhul kasutatud Hutcheon'i pakutud mõisteid, sest ta on loonud terminoloogia, mis võimaldab analüüsida loo jutustamise erinevaid omadusi. Käesoleva uurimuse puhul mängib olulist rolli see, kuidas on kasutatud narratiivi nii McEwani teoses kui ka teose põhjal valminud ekraniseeringus.

Käesolev magistritöö koosneb sissejuhatusest, kahest peatükist ja kokkuvõttest. Sissejuhatus pakub magistritöö lugejale lühikokkuvõtet McEwani romaanist „Lepitust“ ja põhjendab, miks otsustati nimetatud teost analüüsida. Magistritöö esimene peatükk annab ülevaate töö teoreetilisest raamistikust, täpsemini narratiiviteooriast nii kirjanduses kui ka filmis, keskendudes eelkõige diskursust ja erinevaid tehnikaid puudutavatele küsimustele. Esimese peatüki teine pool annab ülevaate Hutcheon'i teooriast seoses ekraniseeringutega. Tegemist on nüüdisajal olulise teooriaga selles vallas. Magistritöö teine peatükk on

empiiriline ja keskendub McEwani teosele „Lepitus“ ja selle ekraniseeringu analüüsimisele tuginedes Hutcheoni teooriale. Seeläbi kirjeldatakse, mil moel erinevad ja sarnanevad omavahel raamat ning selle põhjal valminud film.

Analüüsist selgub, et McEwani „Lepitus“ on narratiivstruktuurilt keeruline teos, mistõttu on selle ekraniseerimine väljakutset pakkuv. Kokkuvõttes näitab magistritöö, et McEwani „Lepituse“ ekraniseering“ jätab kõrvale mõned raamatu narratiivis esinevad ebaselged kohad ja muudab kogu loo vaatajale lihtsasti jälgitavaks, mis ühtlasi muudab kogu loo paljudele inimestele arusaadavamaks, tuues selle nii neile justkui lähemale.

Märksõnad: ekraniseering, film, Ian McEwan, narratiiv

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Ilaha Bakhshaliyeva

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**Lõputöö on lubatud kaitsmisele.**

Katiliina Gielen

19.05.2020