

Adaptations of Orson Scott Card's *Ender's Game*

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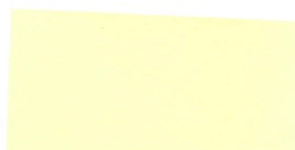
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ABSTRAKT

Tato práce je věnována fenoménu adaptace. Cílem této práce je analyzovat filmovou a komiksovou adaptaci románu *Enderova hra* Orsona Scotta Carda z hlediska věrnosti těchto adaptací původnímu románu. Práce dochází k závěru, že film nabízí přístupnou a vizuálně poutavou interpretaci, zatímco komiks zachovává více z komplexity a hloubky románu. Tyto adaptace ukazují, že zatímco podstatu příběhu lze uchovat napříč různými médii, proces adaptace nezbytně zahrnuje tvůrčí reinterpretaci a modifikace, odrážející jak silné stránky, tak omezení každého média.

Klíčová slova: adaptace, science fiction, komiks, román, film, příběh, věrnost, Orson Scott Card, Gavin Hood, Christopher Yost, *Enderova hra*

ABSTRACT

This thesis is devoted to the phenomena of adaptation. The aim of this thesis is to analyze the film and comics adaptations of Orson Scott Card's novel *Ender's Game* in terms of their fidelity to the original novel. The thesis comes to the conclusion that the film provides an accessible and visually engaging interpretation, whereas the comic book retains more of the novel's intricacies and depth. Ultimately, these adaptations demonstrate that while the essence of a story can be preserved across different media, the process of adaptation inevitably involves creative reinterpretation and modification, reflecting both the strengths and limitations of each medium.

Keywords: adaptation, science fiction, comics, novel, film, narrative, fidelity, Orson Scott Card, Gavin Hood, Christopher Yost, *Ender's Game*.

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INTRODUCTION

Adaptations in the field of literature are mostly stigmatized and perceived as mere imitations of the original artworks. However, the purpose of adaptations is much more intricate than one might think. As the following pages will explain, adaptation does not serve as a simple form of an artwork reproduction but as a tool that can be used to convey the artistic essence across various types of media and even enhance it or change its form completely.

Linda Hutcheon claims that a large portion of the Hollywood film production these days are adaptations. This is supported by the fact that in 1992 85% of all Oscar winning best pictures were adaptations.¹ However, film is not the only type of adaptation through which an artwork can be retold – adaptations of novels can also appear as ballet performances, theatre plays, and even computer games.

It therefore comes as no surprise that the famous novel *Ender's Game* by Orson Scott Card became subject to a film adaptation. This award-winning military science fiction novel, which was published in 1985, became a bestseller and gained a lot of popularity along with the status of an icon in a segment of young adult literature. Based on this success, Orson Scott Card decided to publish several more novels as a sequel to the original story like *Speaker for the Dead*, *Xenocide* and *Children of the Mind*, creating an entire series. This series was later followed by many spinoff books called the *Shadow* series that expanded Ender's world and explored the main story from a different perspective.

The 2013 film *Ender's Game*, directed by Gavin Hood, is not the only adaptation of *Ender's Game* novel. As it will be shown further in the thesis, the novel became an inspiration for at least two further adaptations. Namely, the comic book series published by Marvel between 2008–2010, written by Christopher Yost, and the 2013 audio adaptation *Ender's Game Alive: The Full Cast Audioplay* directed by Gabrielle de Cuir.

As it will be shown in this thesis, the problematic of adaptation is quite extensive and involves multiple aspects which need to be taken into account in order to identify and evaluate it properly. The concept of fidelity presents one of the critical aspects of adaptation, which defines the level of containment of the original narrative within the adapted work.

The aim of this thesis is to examine both the film and comics adaptation in terms of their fidelity to the novel, the changes they introduce, and the ways, in which they reinterpret the original narrative to fit their respective media. The thesis also explores how these adaptations

¹ Linda Hutcheon and Siobhan O'Flynn, *A Theory of Adaptation*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 2013), 4.

manage to retain the essence of the original novel while navigating the challenges and opportunities presented by their formats.

For this reason, the audio adaptation *Ender's Game Alive: The Full Cast Audioplay*² will be excluded from the analysis since the target medium that it uses changes the written word to spoken language only and the alterations from the novel are not as striking as in the case of the two types of adaptations where the target medium relies heavily on the visual imagery.

² Gabrielle de Cuir, dir., *Ender's Game Alive: The Full Cast Audioplay* (Newark, NJ: Audible, 2013). Audio. Timestamp: 0:00:00 – 7:24:00

1 ADAPTATION

The first thing, which this thesis will focus on is a clear definition of the adaptation and its distinguishing features and problematics. According to the Cambridge English Dictionary, adaptation is defined as “the process in which a living thing changes slightly over time to be able to continue to exist in a particular environment.”³ In the world of literature, the principles of this phenomenon are very similar to the biological ones. However, as Linda Hutcheon has demonstrated, the term adaptation in literature can indicate two different things. Either it is referred to as a product or a process.⁴

1.1 Adaptation as a Product or a Process

When the adaptation is referred to as a product, it is understood to be an artwork, which openly states the direct relation to the adapted text and often involves vast transposition between two different types of media or even genres such as from poem to a film, or from realism to science fiction.⁵ In the case of process, the word signifies the act of adapting itself. Usually, reshaping and retelling the adapted text is required for the target audience to understand its intended message. Such process can also have different names depending on the circumstances under which the source text is being adapted. It can either be called salvaging or appropriation.⁶

Thus, if the work is to be called an adaptation, it has to show signs of one or multiple distinguishing characteristics mentioned by Hutcheon, which is firstly a deep intertextual connection with the source text, which means the target audience can tell right away by which work the adaptation was inspired. Secondly, a direct undisputed and clearly stated admittance of transposition of the adapted work, and lastly for the narrative to be retold in a new innovative way.⁷

When we think of adaptation, the first thing that comes to the mind of most people is usually a film based on the novel. However, if we consider all the media through which the adaptation can be created, the scope of our view gets much larger. In the era of digitalization and the Internet it is much easier to communicate and appeal to great audiences. The same goes for adaptation. It is not just a movie that can be considered an adaptation but also theater

³ “Adaptation,” *Cambridge Dictionary*, accessed June 23, 2024, <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/adaptation>.

⁴ Hutcheon, *Theory of Adaptation*, 8.

⁵ Hutcheon, *Theory of Adaptation*, 6–7.

⁶ Hutcheon, *Theory of Adaptation*, 8

⁷ Hutcheon, *Theory of Adaptation*, 8

performances like ballets, operas and various types of plays. Numerous videos on YouTube can also be classified as adaptations since their content is heavily inspired by other works.⁸

In the regards to the process of adaptation, we must not forget that it is not only the story that is subjected to this transformation, but also its subordinate elements such as characters, themes, or even individual units of the story. If these units are exposed to the modifying factors in the form of time compression, plot contracting, order shift or change of focal orientation of the storyline, it almost always leads to their drastic change and thus to the change the whole narrative.⁹

1.2 Theoretical Framework

Continuing with the description of adaptation, this section will further explore the theoretical background of this phenomenon. The admitted source text transposition, which is one of the characteristics of adaptation, is first to be explored. Therefore, it is more than obvious that in order to define adaptation, the transposition must be defined first.¹⁰

1.2.1 Transposition

As it was mentioned before, openly stated transposition is one of the key characteristics when defining adaptation. Therefore, to understand the adaptation, the transposition must be defined first. Transposition can be described as a process, in which the original narrative or any other type of source text is taken from its original medium, modified to fit the criteria of the target medium and then meticulously encoded within its semiotic sign system. That is, as an example from text to picture. It is also worth mentioning that the process of transposition does not occur only between two different types of media, but also can happen within one type of medium as well.¹¹

Undergoing the process of adaptation hence inevitably results in a positive as well as the negative changes to the original source text, where some of its parts can be omitted or be expanded upon. The nature of these changes and their frequency depends solely on the capabilities of original medium as well as those of the target one and their overall compatibility.¹²

⁸ Deborah Cartmell, ed., *A Companion to Literature, Film, and Adaptation* (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 89–90.

⁹ Hutcheon, *Theory of Adaptation*, 10–11

¹⁰ Hutcheon, *Theory of Adaptation*, 7–8

¹¹ Hutcheon, *Theory of Adaptation*, 16

¹² Hutcheon, *Theory of Adaptation*, 16

A good example of this compatibility can be demonstrated on the previously mentioned novel to film adaptation. If we compare a novel to a film, it is mostly evident that each of the two media have their own respective liberties as well as limitations. The novel, as the medium of literature, has the ultimate control over the narrative and can switch from the third to first person view or vice versa to change focus from the character and their interior monologue to the story by using extensive description.

In the case of the film, the character-oriented narratives are much harder to adapt because the film lacks the versatility of literature and instead focuses more on the coherence of the story. It also substitutes the vast description with the use of visual materials and music to convey the desired emotion to the audience. Thus, reducing amount of content for consumption while maintaining the artistic essence of the original narrative.¹³

1.2.2 Adaptation vs Remediation vs Trans Media Narrative

When talking about the transposition it is needed to mention that adaptation is not the only form, which can be marked by this process. There are also two other phenomena, where the transposition can occur and therefore are very similar to adaptation. First of these forms is transmedia narrative, which can be characterized as a one large story spanning across multiple types of media. Simply put, transmedia narrative can begin in the form of the novel, continue as a computer game and end as a comic book, film or television series. Meaning that each type of medium is interpreting a different part of the large narrative.¹⁴

A great example of this form of narrative according to Melanie Schiller's theory is the whole Assassin's Creed franchise, in which the main story is interpreted in the form of a series of video games and then it is further expanded by the series of graphic novels and animated short films. The main reason for using the transmedia narrative is that the segmentation of the story across different types of media allows the producers to introduce the parts of the narrative to multiple audiences through one medium and in doing so stimulates them to explore the other types of media to figure out the rest of the story, which in the end results in long term financial profitability.¹⁵

¹³ Pascal A. Ifri, "One Novel, Five Adaptations: Proust on Film," *Contemporary French and Francophone Studies* 9, no. 1 (2005): 16–17, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1026021042000325435>.

¹⁴ Melanie Schiller, "Transmedia Storytelling: New Practices and Audiences," in *Stories*, ed. Ian Christie and Annie van den Oever (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2018), 99–100, <http://www.jstor.com/stable/j.ctv5rf6vf.10>.

¹⁵ Schiller, "Transmedia Storytelling," 100.

The second form, which according to Linda Hutcheon also undergoes the process of transposition is remediation. Although it may seem that remediation and adaptation are two completely different terms in, reality it's quite the opposite and the two are actually closely connected. Both of them resemble a one-way shift from one medium to the other.¹⁶ Even Linda Hutcheon admits that if the transposition of adaptation happens between two different types of media, it is also considered to be a remediation.¹⁷

This common attribute often causes confusion and further complicates an already inconsistent definition of adaptation. The main difference between these two terms dwells in the approach to the source text, where the adaptation focuses on fidelity to the original whereas the remediation tries to modify or update the source content via the use of new technologies in order to attract new audiences and reflect modern standards.¹⁸

1.3 Critical Approaches

The final part of the theoretical background of adaptation is devoted to the critical approaches including the discourse fidelity concept. This approach is one of the mostly used when defining and evaluating adaptation. This chapter will explain to the reader the basic theory of fidelity concept and its criteria as presented by Hutcheon¹⁹

1.3.1 Discourse Fidelity

As its name already suggests, the goal of the fidelity concept is to determine whenever the adaptation is faithful to the source text by the means of preserving the essence and structure of the original narrative. The comparative nature of this approach allows us to easily identify changes of the narrative caused by the transposition. However, when faced with the previously mentioned facts and complexity of the adaptation, we also encounter some major issues, which, if ignored, can result in an unwarranted criticism and thus, distorted evaluation.

One of the greatest problems of this evaluative method is persistent belief that adaptation is a tool for multiplication, not modification. With this presumption in mind, I would like to point out the dictionary definition of adaptation by Hutcheon and explore it further. As we know, in biology, adaptation is a process which uses replication and structural change in

¹⁶ Schiller, "Transmedia Storytelling," 99.

¹⁷ Hutcheon, *Theory of Adaptation*, 16

¹⁸ Hutcheon, *Theory of Adaptation*, 16

¹⁹ Hutcheon, *Theory of Adaptation*, 16

order to fit certain environment. It is not just a replication that enables the organisms to survive but also the structural change, which is more evident with the increasing number of replications.²⁰

In the world of literature, the principles are the same. According to Garry R. Borlotti, the narrative serves as the agent of replication while the adaptation fills the role of the agent carrier. The adaptation undergoes a transformation more frequently and drastically than the narrative since it is directly exposed to external forces. However, the agent of replication is not spared either. The transformation occurs less frequently with less modification in comparison to adaptation but happens, nonetheless.²¹

In other words, with each adaptation, the original narrative may lose its initial form and its core structure will also change over time, but the essence of the story is still recognizable and therefore, not forgotten. By undergoing the process of adaptation, the narrative ultimately avoids extinction ensures its survival in the creative canon of the human race²²

With such disregard for the variability of the media and their respective liberties and limitations, it is no wonder that the extensive use of this approach has caused adaptations of works to be, as Hutcheon defines, unrightfully stigmatized and devalued among academics and journalists alike. Linda Hutcheon therefore suggests moving away from this outdated theory and focus more on the of medium as well as the modes of engagement, which unlike the discourse fidelity, take media and their specific features as well as the audience interaction into account.²³

1.3.2 Modes of Engagement

The three modes of engagement, which Linda Hutcheon introduces, can provide a better way to not only analyze the story but also analyze the medium through which it is interpreted and its individual properties. These three modes are namely telling mode, showing mode and participatory mode, where the consumer of adaptation is directly interacting with it. The lastly named mode will not be explored in this thesis since it is irrelevant to the chosen types of adaptations because it focuses on the physical interaction with the consumer. That is, for the example through the use of video games.²⁴

²⁰ Gary R. Borlotti and Linda Hutcheon, "On the Origin of Adaptations: Rethinking Fidelity Discourse and 'Success': Biologically," *New Literary History* 38, no. 3 (2007): 447–448, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/20058017>.

²¹ Borlotti and Hutcheon, "On the Origin of Adaptations," 447–448.

²² Borlotti and Hutcheon, "On the Origin of Adaptations," 447–448.

²³ Hutcheon, *Theory of Adaptation*, 2–22.

²⁴ Hutcheon, *Theory of Adaptation*, 22–23.

Telling mode focuses on the interaction between the reader and any kind of written textual form of medium and narrative. An example of this can be a novel, where the imagination of the reader is directly stimulated through text and its segments. This type of mode offers the reader with original perception of text and story because the imagination and its capabilities differ from person to person. It also allows the reader to have the ultimate control over the flow of the narrative thanks to the direct physical interaction with the medium in real time. In this case a book, which can be closed or skipped through at anytime²⁵

When it comes to the showing mode, the experience of the consumer is quite different to that of the reader. The main reason for this is that the showing mode does not use written language as a primary communication device. Instead, it relies on the use of audio-visual materials, which in exchange for the control over the narrative offer the consumer more diverse means of perception and therefore greater immersion into the story. The only disadvantage to this showing mode is the real time reciprocity where the attention of the consumer must always focus on the performance. Otherwise, they can miss the crucial points within the story. The obvious example of media which uses this mode is film or any kind of theater performance.²⁶

1.4 Narrative Structuralization and Adaptations

The concept of narrative structure is essential in literary theory and crucial for the analysis of adaptations. Seymour Chatman's book *Story and Discourse* (1978) offers a comprehensive framework for understanding how narratives are constructed and presented. His distinction between "story" and "discourse" provides an analytical tool for examining the differences between a literary work and its adaptation into another medium.

Chatman divides narrative into two fundamental components: "story" and "discourse." The "story" refers to the content of the narrative in form of the events that take place, the characters involved, and the setting, in which these events occur. It is the underlying structure of the narrative, often considered the what of the narrative, independent of how it is told.²⁷ The "discourse" on the other hand, concerns the *how* of the narrative, the manner, in which the story is conveyed to the audience. This includes the narrative techniques, the order of events, the perspective from which the story is told, and the language or medium

²⁵ Hutcheon, *Theory of Adaptation*, 23.

²⁶ Hutcheon, *Theory of Adaptation*, 23.

²⁷ Seymour Chatman, *Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1978), 19–20.

used in the storytelling process. In essence, the discourse shapes the reader's or viewer's experience and interpretation of the story by determining the presentation of its elements.²⁸

Within the concept of story, Chatman further distinguishes between events and existents. These two categories distinguish the core elements that make up the narrative content. Events are the occurrences within the story that drive the narrative forward. Events are the dynamic aspects of the story and are further divided into actions and happenings. Actions are events that involve deliberate, purposeful acts carried out by characters. Such actions are driven by the intentions of the characters and often form the backbone of the narrative's plot. Happenings on the other hand are events that occur without the direct intention of any character. These are external occurrences or incidents that affect the characters and the progression of the story but are not directly controlled by them.²⁹

The category of existents includes the static elements of the story that exist within the narrative and are further divided into characters and setting. Characters are essentially the beings or entities, whether human or otherwise, who inhabit the story and are involved in the events and are central to the story's progression and interact with both actions and happenings. The environment or context in which the story takes place is called Setting. This includes the physical, social, and cultural backdrop against which the events unfold. The setting provides the necessary context for understanding the actions and experiences of the characters. This detailed categorization of the story can serve as a convenient way of structuring the analysis of modifications in the adaptations of the *Ender's Game* novel.³⁰

The discourse is the vehicle through which the story is delivered to the audience. It involves the choices made in the narrative's delivery, such as the order in which events are revealed, the perspective or point of view from which the story is told, and the stylistic devices employed. In adaptations, the discourse is particularly significant, as it often undergoes substantial changes to suit the medium, which can alter the audience's perception of the original story.³¹

²⁸ Chatman, *Story and Discourse*, 19–20.

²⁹ Chatman, *Story and Discourse*, 21–22.

³⁰ Chatman, *Story and Discourse*, 22–23.

³¹ Chatman, *Story and Discourse*, 19.

2 ORSON SCOTT CARD'S *ENDER'S GAME* TEXT: THE NOVEL

The novel *Ender's Game* was specifically chosen for this thesis because it is a subject of many adaptations, beginning with an ongoing series of comics *Ender's Game: Battle School* and *Ender's Game: Commands School*, and continuing with the film adaptation *Ender's Game* from the year 2013. There is also the audio adaptation called *Ender's Game Alive: The Full Cast Audioplay*. However, the thesis will focus only on the movie adaptation and on the comics series adaptation. The reason why the audio play adaptation is not explored in this thesis is that movie adaptation as well as the comics series rely heavily on the visual representation, which is missing in the audio play.³²

2.1 Orson Scott Card

Orson Scott Card is a renowned American writer of the young adult literature, especially focusing on the science fiction genre. He was born in 1951 in Richland, WA, and grew up in Utah. At present he lives in Greensboro in North Carolina together with his wife Christine Allen Card.³³

Darren Harris Fain points out that in the context of American sci-fi, Orson Scott Card is classified as a military science fiction writer. The main reason for this categorization was the need of the American writers to react to military conflicts, in which the US was involved in, at the time of the Reagan-Bush era. Given the fact that *Ender's Game* novel was published in 1985 with the Cold War in full force, and explores multiple moral dilemmas, the classification of the author amid this subgenre is undisputable.³⁴

2.2 *Ender's Game*

Orson Scott Card is recognized as a military science fiction writer and *Ender's Game* novel contains many elements associated with this subgenre of American science fiction. The year of publication, as well as the questioning of morals are characteristics only suggesting such classification. However, the ever-present element of war along with the interstellar

³² Mike Ryder, "The Literature of Drones: Ethics and Remote Killing in *Ender's Game*," *Foundation* 52, no. 144 (2023): 36, <https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/literature-drones-ethics-remote-killing-enders/docview/2858380889/se-2>.

³³ Hatrack River, "About Orson Scott Card," <http://www.hatrack.com/osc/about-more.shtml>.

³⁴ Eric Carl Link and Gerry Canavan, eds., *The Cambridge Companion to American Science Fiction* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 40.

environment are undoubtedly the defining traits, which classify this novel as a work of military science fiction.³⁵

The novel tells the story of a young 6-year-old boy Andrew Wiggin called Ender, who is gifted with remarkable intelligence and tactical genius. At the young age, he is taken from his family and relocated to the Battle School, which is a station located in outer space. The Battle School is a military institution specializing in training young soldiers. Andrew is being trained with the sole purpose of defeating the alien race known as Formics, which had previously invaded earth twice and almost wiped-out human race. With the imminent threat of another invasion, Andrew is seen as the last hope of humanity to save it from potential extinction.³⁶

Through the use of manipulation, isolation and pitting against other soldiers, Ender is trained for the role of the commander of the fleet, which is supposed to destroy the alien race. The training turns out to be successful and Ender, along with his friends, whom he had made at the Battle School, goes through a series of computer-generated simulations portraying the supposed assault. Thanks to the remarkable execution of teamwork and precision, Ender is able to win the simulations and eliminate the threat, only to find out that the simulations were real battles and Ender along with his friends were maneuvering and sacrificing real ships and lives of soldiers onboard.³⁷

Struck with horror, Andrew realizes that he had unknowingly wiped out the entire alien race except for one remaining cocoon, which contains the queen. The feeling of despair is further amplified when Ender discovers the true cause of the war waged against the Formics, i.e., a lack of communication between the two species.³⁸ Andrew then takes the cocoon and promises to find a new place for the Formics to repopulate and flourish again. With this in mind, Andrew embarks on a voyage through the space along with his sister Valentine and spreads the story about Formic race in the process.³⁹

³⁵ Mike Ryder, "The Literature of Drones: Ethics and Remote Killing in Ender's Game," *Foundation* 52, no. 144 (2023): 38, <https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/literature-drones-ethics-remote-killing-enders/docview/2858380889/se-2>.

³⁶ Ryder, "The Literature of Drones," 37.

³⁷ Ryder, "The Literature of Drones," 37.

³⁸ Chris Crowe, "Young Adult Literature: Peace-Keeping Forces: YA War Books," *The English Journal* 89, no. 5 (May 2000): 161, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/822325>.

³⁹ Ryder, "The Literature of Drones," 37.

2.3 Ender's Saga

The book that is the focus of this work is not a standalone story but rather the first one in a vast and complex series of novels that follow the life of Ender Wiggin and his world. After the success of *Ender's Game*, Card decided to expand the universe he had created and dive deeper into the themes and questions introduced by Ender's story. This decision led to the creation of numerous sequels and spin-offs that explore not only the further adventures of the main characters but also broader ethical and philosophical questions.

The Ender series includes several key sequels, such as *Speaker for the Dead*, *Xenocide*, and *Children of the Mind*. These books significantly differ from the original *Ender's Game* in both style and focus. While *Ender's Game* is primarily a military sci-fi story centred on strategy and survival, the subsequent books dive more into philosophical questions about life, death, and the interaction between different species. Ender himself evolves from a military strategist into a character who seeks to reconcile with the consequences of his actions and find meaning in a broader universe.

In addition to the main series, there are several spin-off books that focus on other characters and events in Ender's world. One of the most notable is the *Shadow* series, which follows the life of Bean and other supporting characters from *Ender's Game*. These books expand on the events and world of Ender, offering new perspectives and a deeper understanding of some of the key moments in the series.⁴⁰

⁴⁰ "Orson Scott Card's Website," Hatrack River, <http://www.hatrack.com/osc/index.shtml>.

3 *ENDER'S GAME: THE FILM*

The first subject of the analysis of this thesis will be the film adaptation *Ender's Game* (2013). The film with the length of 1 hour and 49 minutes was directed by Gavin Hood and stars famous Hollywood actors such as Harrison Ford in the role of the Colonel Hyrum Graff, Asa Butterfield as Ender Wiggin, Viola Davis as Major Gwen Anderson and Hailee Steinfeld as Petra Arkanian. With the overall score of 6.6 stars out of 10, received by more than 250,000 voters, it can be said that the movie was received quite well by the audience.⁴¹

3.1 Film as a Medium

As Peter Verstraten points out, film, as a medium, possesses a unique set of characteristics that differentiate it from other forms of narrative, such as literature or theatre. When adapting a literary work into a film, these characteristics play a crucial role in shaping how the story is translated from the written word to the visual and auditory dimensions of cinema. Understanding these features is essential for analysing how film adaptations reinterpret and sometimes transform the source material.⁴²

3.1.1 Visual and Auditory Elements

One of the most prominent aspects of film according to Linda Hutcheon is its reliance on visual and auditory elements to convey the narrative. Unlike literature, which primarily uses descriptive written language to create imagery in the reader's mind, film presents images directly through cinematography, mise-en-scène, and visual effects. The director's choices regarding camera angles, lighting, color schemes, and shot composition all contribute to the film's visual storytelling.

Additionally, sound plays a significant role in film. Dialogue, music, and sound effects work together to enhance the narrative, create mood, and develop character. The auditory dimension allows for the use of a soundtrack, which can provide emotional cues or underscore thematic elements that might be more subtly suggested in a literary text.

These visual and auditory components allow films to convey information rapidly and with immediate impact. However, they also necessitate that certain narrative elements be compressed, altered, or omitted compared to their literary counterparts. The translation from

⁴¹ IMDb, "Ender's Game (2013) – IMDb," IMDb, <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt1731141/>.

⁴² Peter Verstraten, *Film Narratology*, trans. Stefan van der Lecq (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), 3–4.

text to screen involves a shift from the abstract and interpretative nature of reading to the more concrete and immediate nature of viewing and listening.⁴³

3.1.2 Temporal Structure

Another key characteristic of film is its manipulation of time mentioned by Seymour Chatman. Films typically operate within a limited time frame, often between 90 minutes and 2 hours, which imposes constraints on how the narrative is presented. This temporal limitation requires filmmakers to make deliberate choices about which parts of the story to emphasize, condense, or exclude. As a result, the pacing of the story in a film adaptation can differ significantly from that of the literary source. Moreover, film allows for non-linear storytelling through techniques such as flashbacks, flash-forwards, and parallel editing. These methods enable filmmakers to present a narrative out of chronological order, thus offering different perspectives or highlighting particular themes. The ability to manipulate time in this way is a distinctive feature of the film medium that can introduce new dimensions to a story that might not be as easily achieved in written form.⁴⁴

3.1.3 Spatial Representation

The spatial aspect of film is another distinguishing feature mentioned in Chatman's theory. Unlike literature, which describes settings through words, film physically constructs and visualizes spaces for the audience. The design of sets, locations, and the framing of scenes contribute to the overall atmosphere of the film and can influence how the audience perceives the story. This spatial representation allows filmmakers to create a vivid and immersive world that can either closely follow the descriptions in the literary source or reinterpret them in new and imaginative ways. The physicality of the film's world can lend a sense of realism or, conversely, can be stylized to evoke a specific tone or genre.⁴⁵

3.1.4 Limitations and Potentials of Film

While film offers powerful tools for storytelling, Hutcheon emphasizes the fact that it also presents certain limitations, especially when adapting from literature. The necessity to condense a narrative to fit within the film's temporal constraints often leads to the omission of subplots, characters, or detailed descriptions that are present in the original text. This can result in a narrative that is more focused but potentially less nuanced. On the other hand,

⁴³ Hutcheon, *Theory of Adaptation*, 40–41.

⁴⁴ Chatman, *Story and Discourse*, 84–85.

⁴⁵ Chatman, *Story and Discourse*, 113.

film's ability to combine visual, auditory, and temporal elements in a cohesive narrative provides opportunities to enhance or reinterpret the source material in ways that literature alone cannot achieve. For example, the use of visual symbolism or a powerful score can add layers of meaning that complement or expand upon the themes of the original literary work.⁴⁶

3.2 Differences from the Novel: Omissions

As Linda Hutcheon points out, adapting literary work to a film inevitably results in the reduction of the narrative due to the temporal limitations of the film medium. Such reduction can be done in many ways ranging from removing insignificant or irrelevant subplots, which have little to no effect on the main storyline. Another way of the plot contraction is to remove characters and vast descriptions and other types of literary devices. The film adaptation of *Ender's Game* is no exception to these practices as it is demonstrated below with the application of Chatman division of narrative elements.⁴⁷

3.2.1 Omitted Characters

Characters such as Shen, Major Imbu, General Pace, Crazy Tom, Han Tzu (Hot Soup) and Rose the Nose, who play various roles in the novel, are completely omitted from the film. Their absence affects the narrative depth and the interactions between the remaining characters, particularly in scenes where these omitted characters have crucial roles. In the movie, this issue was solved mostly with character expansion where certain characters in the movie undergo the events experienced by one of the omitted characters.⁴⁸ A great example of this phenomenon can be seen in the movie, where Alai gets bullied by Bernard in the lecture hall,⁴⁹ but in the novel, a character of Shen is bullied:

Some of the boys were willing servants, doing whatever he wanted even though he treated them with contempt. But a few chafed under Bernard's rule. Ender, watching, knew who resented Bernard. Shen was small, ambitious, and easily needed. Bernard had discovered that quickly and started calling him Worm. "Because he's so small," Bernard said, "and because he wriggles. Look how he shimmies his butt when he walks." Shen stormed off, but they only laughed louder. "Look at his butt. See ya, Worm!"⁵⁰

⁴⁶ Hutcheon, *Theory of Adaptation*, 43.

⁴⁷ Hutcheon, *Theory of Adaptation*, 43.

⁴⁸ Hood, Gavin, dir. *Ender's Game*. 2013; Los Angeles, CA: Summit Entertainment, 2013. DVD. Timestamp: 0:00:00 – 1:49:04.

⁴⁹ Hood, *Ender's Game*, 0:27:50.

⁵⁰ Orson Scott Card, *Ender's Game*, Repackaged Mass Market Edition (New York: Tor, 2021), 49.

3.2.2 Omitted Events

Death is also one of the events frequently left out in the case on this film. The reason for this is most probably the target audience, which mostly consist of young adults. Since the film has PG 13 age restriction along with the recommendation of parental supervision, it is no wonder that the element of death was euphemised or completely left out.⁵¹ In the film, Bonzo survives the fight with Ender and is shown being operated on.⁵² In the novel, Bonzo dies as a result of the fight, a significant event that contributes to Ender's psychological development and the narrative's exploration of violence. The novel also reveals that, in Chapter 12, along with Bonzo, Ender had killed Stilson, an event crucial to his character arc.

“... On the other hand, there's the fourth passenger on the shuttle. The one traveling in a bag.” “Only the second death in the history of the school. At least it wasn't a suicide this time.” “How is murder better, Major Imbu?” “It wasn't murder, Colonel. We have it on video from two angles. No one can blame Ender.” “But they might blame Graff. After all this is over, the civilians can rake over our files and decide what was right and what was not. Give us medals where they think we were right, take away our pensions and put us in jail where they decide we were wrong. At least they had the good sense not to tell Ender that the boy died.” “It's the second time, too.” “They didn't tell him about Stilson, either.” “The kid is scary.” “Ender Wiggin isn't a killer.”⁵³

This is omitted from the film, removing a critical element of Ender's internal struggle and the novel's exploration of morality and violence.⁵⁴

One of the two crucial plot cuts, which significantly changed the overall perception of the story, in the film would definitely be the omission of Chapter 8 “Rat.” The film largely omits the events of this chapter, which details Ender's experiences and development within the Rat Army under Dink Meeker's command. This omission simplifies the narrative, focusing more directly on Ender's journey toward becoming a commander, and skips over the complexities of his time in this intermediary army.

The second, and the most significant omission in the film is without a doubt the near-complete exclusion of Chapter 9, “Locke and Demosthenes.” This chapter is one of the longest in the novel and looks deeply into the relationship between Ender's older siblings Peter and Valentine, exploring their political manoeuvrings on Earth. The chapter also plays

⁵¹ Australian Council on Children and the Media, “Ender's Game,” *Raising Children*, <https://raisingchildren.net.au/guides/movie-reviews/ender-s-game>.

⁵² Hood, *Ender's Game*, 0:56:35.

⁵³ Card, *Ender's Game*, 225–226.

⁵⁴ Hood, *Ender's Game*, 1:01:11.

a crucial role in setting up the story's conclusion, as it foreshadows the influence they will have on the world. The film's decision to exclude this chapter likely stems from the need to streamline the narrative and focus on Ender's direct storyline, which is more central to the film's action-oriented adaptation. However, this omission reduces the depth of the political and familial dynamics that are pivotal in the novel's broader narrative context.

3.3 Differences from the Novel: Changes

While some elements are simply omitted in the film, others remain but are changed. The following subchapters identify the most important ones.

3.3.1 Changes in Characters

The most notable change, which is obvious throughout the entire film in all of the characters is the lack of aging. In the film, Ender and his friends do not visibly age throughout the narrative, which differs significantly from the novel. In the book, Ender starts at the age of 6 and is 13 by the time the story concludes, reflecting a significant period of growth and development. However, the actor Asa Butterfield, who played Ender, was 16 years old at the time of filming, and his character's appearance remains consistent throughout the film. This lack of aging simplifies the portrayal of Ender's character arc, reducing the emphasis on his gradual maturation over the years and focusing more on the immediate challenges he faces. This choice impacts the viewer's understanding of Ender's development, making his journey appear more compressed and less reflective of the long-term growth seen in the novel.

One of the most radical changes regarding individual characters was done to the character of Major Anderson, where gender and race of the character were changed in order to evoke a higher level of empathy towards Ender from the character. In the film, Major Anderson is portrayed by Viola Davis as a black woman named Gwen Anderson,⁵⁵ whereas in the novel, Anderson is a male with no first name.

The lights went full, and Major Anderson himself came through the teachergate at the south end of the battleroom. He looked very solemn as he offered Ender the teacher hook that was ritually given to the victor in the game.⁵⁶

This change also affects the dynamics between characters, particularly in interactions with Graff.

⁵⁵ Hood, *Ender's Game*, 0:18:35.

⁵⁶ Card, *Ender's Game*, 179.

Major Anderson's role is also significantly expanded, most likely to compensate for the omission of other characters and events from the novel. For instance, in the book, it is Major Imbu, who discusses the presence of Peter in the mind game with Graff, but in the film, this conversation is handled by Major Anderson.⁵⁷ Furthermore, Anderson takes on a more active and pivotal role in the film by resigning after the fight between Ender and Bonzo, a significant departure from the novel, where no such resignation occurs. Instead, in the novel, Sergeant Dap reports Graff's conduct to his superiors, a detail that is entirely omitted from the film:

“Ah. I guess this means Dap filed a report.” “He feels—paternal toward the students here. He feels your neglect of a potentially lethal situation is more than negligence—that it borders on conspiracy to cause the death or serious injury of one of the students here.”⁵⁸

This alteration not only changes Anderson's character arc but also contributes to the condensation of the storyline, reducing the overall complexity and length of the film's narrative compared to the novel.⁵⁹

Another character, whose role in the movie differs from the one in the book due to expansion and alteration is Petra Arkanian. In the film, Petra's role is significantly expanded compared to her role in the novel. For example, she is shown stepping in as a substitute for an injured soldier during a crucial battle,⁶⁰ an episode that does not exist in the book. Additionally, Petra is depicted as staying by Ender's side after he is sedated, and she is the one, who is with him when he wakes up.⁶¹ In contrast, the novel portrays Alai as the one who remains with Ender during this critical time. Furthermore, the film omits the fact that Petra eventually becomes the commander of the Phoenix Army,⁶² a crucial fact in the book, where Ender serves under her command before he is assigned to lead his own Dragon Army. This omission, along with the expanded role she plays in the film, significantly alters Petra's character arc and the dynamics within Ender's team. These changes make Petra a more central figure in the film's narrative, shifting the focus of her relationship with Ender and her role within the story from that of a friend to the one of possible love interest.⁶³

⁵⁷ Hood, *Ender's Game*, 0:46:55.

⁵⁸ Card, *Ender's Game*, 200.

⁵⁹ Hood, *Ender's Game*, 0:58:45.

⁶⁰ Hood, *Ender's Game*, 0:52:02.

⁶¹ Hood, *Ender's Game*, 1:35:05.

⁶² Card, *Ender's Game*, 138–139.

⁶³ Hood, *Ender's Game*, 0:52:02, 1:35:05.

Last but not least, one of the characters with a great expansion to their role in the film is without a doubt Bernard. In the book, Bernard is primarily introduced as a bully who torments Ender early on, but his involvement decreases as the story progresses. However, in the film, Bernard's character remains more prominent throughout the story. For instance, Bernard is introduced during one of the lectures where he bullies Alai,⁶⁴ a scene that replaces the book's portrayal of Shen, who is not mentioned in the film. It is also worth mentioning that in chapter 12 of the novel, where Ender was assaulted in the shower by Bonzo, it was Bernard who teamed up with him to corner Ender, which makes his friendlier nature in the movie more surprising.

Later, Bernard becomes a member of Ender's Dragon Army, which is a significant deviation from the novel, where Bernard is not mentioned in this context. This expanded role alters the dynamics within Ender's team and provides a continuous point of conflict, which intensifies the interpersonal challenges Ender faces as a leader. The film's decision to keep Bernard's character active throughout the story shifts the focus of the narrative, emphasizing the ongoing challenges of leadership and peer dynamics that Ender must navigate.⁶⁵

Aside from the characters whose role is expanded there are also those that have significantly reduced roles and their backgrounds are omitted. These changes are often done in order to shift focus on the main characters and their actions. As a result, the less important characters lose their depth and overall value, which also gives the director the power to alter their appearance and physical features in order to resemble specific actors. In the case of the movie, these reductions were done to multiple characters. The first example of such alterations can be seen in the case of Ender's older siblings Peter and Valentine. In the film, Peter is depicted as a blonde boy,⁶⁶ while in the novel, he is described as having dark hair:

Ender did not see Peter as the beautiful ten-year-old boy that grown-ups saw, with dark, thick, tousled hair and a face that could have belonged to Alexander the Great.⁶⁷

Valentine on the other hand is depicted a brunette with wavy hair but the novel does not explore her appearance in detail.⁶⁸

⁶⁴ Hood, *Ender's Game*, 0:27:50.

⁶⁵ Hood, *Ender's Game*, 0:49:55.

⁶⁶ Hood, *Ender's Game*, 0:08:35.

⁶⁷ Card, *Ender's Game*, 10.

⁶⁸ Hood, *Ender's Game*, 0:06:05.

The same changes were done to the character of Bonzo Madrid, when his physical appearance is altered and does not fully correspond with the one in the novel. In the film, Bonzo is shorter than Ender,⁶⁹ which is the opposite to the depiction in the novel, where he is described as tall:

Ender turned to the door. A boy stood there, tall and slender, with beautiful black eyes and slender lips that hinted at refinement. I would follow such beauty, said something inside Ender. I would see as those eyes see. “Who are you?” asked the boy quietly.⁷⁰

This change alters the power dynamics in their confrontations, affecting the viewer’s perception of the threat Bonzo poses.

On the contrary, the physical appearance of Colonel Hyrum Graff remained the same throughout the entire film, which does not depict Graff gaining weight, a fact that in the novel reflects Graff’s stress and dedication during Ender’s training and the subsequent war:

Ender got up and followed Anderson through the corridors. Anderson palmed the locks that kept students out of the officers’ quarters; finally they came to where Graff had taken root on a swivel chair bolted to the steel floor. His belly spilled over both armrests now, even when he sat upright. Ender tried to remember. Graff hadn’t seemed particularly fat at all when Ender first met him, only four years ago.⁷¹

This omission affects the portrayal of Graff’s character and his commitment to Ender’s development.⁷²

The last character who underwent a major change in the movie was without a doubt a young Muslim boy named Alai. However, this change did not affect his appearance as much as his depth within the main plot. As it was previously mentioned, Petra Arkanian was at Ender’s side when he woke up after being sedated. In the novel, the one by Ender’s side was Alai. This change undermines the emphasis on their strong friendship they had built over the years as the Battle School.⁷³

The biggest change in the movie occurred when Ender was parting with Alai after being reassigned to the Salamander army. In the film, Alai says “salaam” and places his hand on

⁶⁹ Hood, *Ender’s Game*, 0:32:53.

⁷⁰ Card, *Ender’s Game*, 76.

⁷¹ Card, *Ender’s Game*, 189–190.

⁷² Hood, *Ender’s Game*, 0:47:44.

⁷³ Hood, *Ender’s Game*, 1:35:05.

Ender's shoulder when they part.⁷⁴ In the novel, this moment is depicted as more intimate, with Alai kissing Ender on the cheek. This change alters the depiction of their friendship, making it less intimate in the film adaptation, which affects the viewer's perception of the bond between these two characters:

Alai suddenly kissed Ender on the cheek and whispered in his ear, "Salaam." Then, red-faced, he turned away and walked to his own bed at the back of the barracks. Ender guessed that the kiss and the word were somehow forbidden. A suppressed religion, perhaps. Or maybe the word had some private and powerful meaning for Alai alone. Whatever it meant to Alai, Ender knew that it was sacred...⁷⁵

3.3.2 Changes in Setting

When it comes to setting changes in the movie, a few of them were done in connection with the portrayed interstellar objects. The first change was done to the Battle School spaceship in the terms of size, which was most probably done in order to focus the use of visual effects on other, more important, subjects of plot and therefore, save costs. The film depicts the Battle School as much smaller, with only one battle room,⁷⁶ whereas the novel describes it during Ender's conversation with Petra as having nine battle rooms in a rotating segment of the ship. This change also reduces the scale of the battles and the complexity of the training sequences, impacting the narrative's portrayal of Ender's military education:

"There are really nine battlerooms." "I never heard of any others." "They all have the same entrance. The whole center of the battle school, the hub of the wheel, is battlerooms. They don't rotate with the rest of the station. That's how they do the nullo, the no-gravity—it just holds still. No spin, no down. But they can set it up so that any one of the rooms is at the battleroom entrance corridor that we all use. Once you're inside, they move it along and another battleroom's in position."⁷⁷

The second change in the setting was done in form of the portrayal of interstellar travel. In the film, Ender sleeps through the journey to the Command Base,⁷⁸ while in the novel, the journey takes several months, during which Ender learns about the Formics from Graff: "Oh, no, of course not. I.F. Command is on the minor planet Eros, which should be about three months away from here at the highest possible speed. Which is the speed you'll use, ofcourse."⁷⁹

⁷⁴ Hood, *Ender's Game*, 0:32:22.

⁷⁵ Card, *Ender's Game*, 69–70.

⁷⁶ Hood, *Ender's Game*, 0:14:04.

⁷⁷ Card, *Ender's Game*, 79–80

⁷⁸ Hood, *Ender's Game*, 1:03:33.

⁷⁹ Card, *Ender's Game*, 247.

This alteration impacts the narrative pacing and the depth of Ender's understanding of his enemy. Moreover, the novel specifies the location of a Command Base as a minor planet called Eros, which was previously inhabited by Formics. The name of the planet is not mentioned in the film.

3.3.3 Changes in Events

The events in the movie were not saved from alteration and modification either. In order to save the valuable time and shift the main focus on Ender as the main character, changes were made to interpret the main story as effectively as possible. A great example of focalization on the main character of Ender can be seen in the scene of Ender's departures from his family. In the film, Ender leaves without being extensively persuaded by Colonel Graff,⁸⁰ while in the novel this is a pivotal moment. This change alters the depiction of Ender's motivations and his relationship with Graff as well as the religious background of his parents and two children's politics:

“They do love you, Ender. But you have to understand what your life has cost them. They were born religious, you know. Your father was baptized with the name John Paul Wiczorek. Catholic. The seventh of nine children.” Nine children. That was unthinkable. Criminal.⁸¹

Another technique of timesaving that was executed in the movie more than once can be seen when Ender says his goodbye to his family. The film replaces the conversation between Major Imbu and Graff with Ender's monologue about his siblings' natures.⁸² This shift changes the narrative focus and reduces the external perspective on Ender's character development:

“OK, it's for his good. But why. His brother is dangerous, his brother was rejected for this program because he's one of the most ruthless and unreliable human beings we've laid hands on. Why is he so important to Ender? Why, after all this time?”⁸³

One of the most radical changes of events in the movie is a reduction in the visual representation of the Mind Game, where the difference from the novel is the most notable.

⁸⁰ Hood, *Ender's Game*, 0:10:40.

⁸¹ Card, *Ender's Game*, 22.

⁸² Hood, *Ender's Game*, 0:10:45.

⁸³ Card, *Ender's Game*, 122.

In the film, the mind game features a mirror ball inside the castle,⁸⁴ while in the novel, it is a mirror on the wall. Another big difference is represented in the number of forms, which Ender changes into while playing the game. In the movie, he is seen to be in the form of a mouse and a small human. In the novel however, it is described that he took on forms of multiple animals throughout the game. This change affects the symbolic representation in the story, altering the viewer's interpretation of Ender's psychological state:

His figure on the screen had started out as a little boy. For a while it had changed into a bear. Now it was a large mouse, with long and delicate hands. He ran his figure under a lot of large items of furniture depicted on the screen. He had played with the cat a lot, but now it was boring—too easy to dodge, he knew all the furniture. Not through the mousehole this time, he told himself. I'm sick of the Giant. It's a dumb game and I can't ever win. Whatever I choose is wrong. But he went through the mousehole anyway, and over the small bridge in the garden. He avoided the ducks and the divebombing mosquitoes—he had tried playing with them but they were too easy, and if he played with the ducks too long he turned into a fish, which he didn't like.⁸⁵

Chatman points out that an earlier introduction of characters is also one of the ways through which a plot can be condensed and precious time saved.⁸⁶ In the film, this condensation is done when Ender meets Bean during the launch of the shuttle into the space,⁸⁷ whereas in the novel, they meet much later in Chapter 10, "Dragon." This reordering alters the timing of the interactions between key characters and their subsequent relationships. Alai is also introduced during the shuttle ride to the Battle School,⁸⁸ while in the novel, they meet later during Chapter 6, "The Giant's Drink." This reordering of events changes the initial dynamics between characters.

The final event change, which is most striking when compared to the novel, is definitely the condensation of ending along with the changes to Ender's Mission. The film significantly shortens the content of Chapter 15, "Speaker for the Dead," from the novel. In the book, Ender's next mission is fully developed as he leads the colonization of the Formic home planet by humans. However, in the film, this part of the story is largely condensed, and instead of finding the queen's cocoon on the Formic planet during a colonization mission,

⁸⁴ Hood, *Ender's Game*, 0:46:35.

⁸⁵ Card, *Ender's Game*, 62.

⁸⁶ Chatman, *Story and Discourse*, 84–85.

⁸⁷ Hood, *Ender's Game*, 0:11:42.

⁸⁸ Hood, *Ender's Game*, 0:13:27.

Ender discovers it on Eros.⁸⁹ This alteration reduces the scope of Ender's journey and the thematic exploration of redemption and reconciliation, focusing instead on a more immediate and contained resolution.

3.4 Evaluation

In evaluating the film adaptation of *Ender's Game*, it is evident that the adaptation strives to balance fidelity to the original novel with the inherent constraints and opportunities presented by the film medium. While the film retains many of the core elements of Orson Scott Card's narrative, significant alterations to characters, events, and settings indicate a deliberate effort to condense and modify the complex and expansive structure of the novel to fit within the limited runtime and visual storytelling capabilities of cinema.

One of the most notable aspects of this adaptation is the omission of several key characters and events from the novel. Characters such as Shen, Major Imbu, and Rose the Nose, who play crucial roles in the book, are entirely absent from the film, thereby reducing the depth of character interactions and altering the dynamics between the remaining characters. These omissions, coupled with the modifications to the physical appearances of characters like Bonzo Madrid and Peter Wiggin, shift the power dynamics and alter the audience's perception of key relationships and conflicts.

Furthermore, changes in the portrayal of the setting, such as the Battle School spaceship being depicted as smaller and less complex than described in the novel, impact the scale and intricacy of the training sequences, thus influencing the audience's understanding of Ender's military education. Temporal adjustments are also evident, particularly in the condensation of Ender's journey to the Command Base, which is significantly shortened, thereby diminishing the narrative depth and Ender's comprehension of his enemy.

The characterization of Ender and his peers also undergoes notable alterations, particularly in terms of their age. In the film, Ender and his companions do not visibly age throughout the story, a departure from the novel where Ender matures significantly over several years. This choice simplifies Ender's character arc, making his journey appear more immediate and less reflective of the long-term development emphasized in the novel.

Overall, the film adaptation of *Ender's Game* presents a mixed approach to fidelity. While it preserves the basic structure and key elements of the story, the numerous changes and omissions reflect not only the need to adapt the narrative to the constraints of the film

⁸⁹ Hood, *Ender's Game*, 1:38:34.

medium but also an effort to make the story more accessible and engaging to a broader audience. This suggests that the film draws upon the novel's popularity, while also making significant adaptations that may alter the original message and depth of the story.

4 *ENDER'S GAME: THE COMICS*

The second object of the analysis in this thesis are two series of comic books *Ender's Game* published continuously by Marvel Publishing throughout the years 2008 and 2010. Both of the series were written by Christopher Yost and drawn by the renowned artist Pasqual Ferry. Each of the series contains 5 comic books and has its own subtitle, the first being *Battle School* and the second *Command School*.⁹⁰

According to Dan Mazur, by the year 2001 Marvel Publishing company began to shift from the simple comics book publishing business model to a more profit oriented one with the revival of some of its most iconic comics series like *X-Men*. In 2009, this change was confirmed, when Marvel was acquired by the Walt Disney company. Given the year of publication of both *Ender's Game* comic book series, which fits within the time frame of this change, it is more than obvious that the motivation for the publication of this series was most probably the financial gain.⁹¹

4.1 Comics as a Medium

When it comes to the comics as a medium, it can definitely be considered as one of the best types of media for adapting, not only because of its efficient use of visual imagery, which enables it to condense and portray large amounts of narrative events within a relatively small space, but also thanks to its short rigid structure which forces the unknowing reader to maintain focus on the story and helps to deliver the narrative in the most efficient way. With such great attributes, it is no wonder that when compared to the novel, it seems much more attractive for the reader in the means of amount of consumed material. However, this type of media also has its limitations, which need to be taken into account when adapting, as it will be explained below.

4.1.1 Plot Condensation

One of the primary concerns, when adapting novels into comics, is the condensation and shortening of the narrative. Due to the limitations of the comic format, which generally requires a more concise retelling of stories, lengthy novels often undergo significant reduction. According to Kirsten Møllegaard, comic adaptations frequently shorten the

⁹⁰ "Ender's Game: Command School (2009–2010)," Marvel, https://www.marvel.com/comics/series/7739/enders_game_command_school_2009_2010.

⁹¹ Dan Mazur and Alexander Danner, *Comics: A Global History, 1968 to the Present* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2013), 227.

original texts by omitting subplots and secondary narratives. However, this process is not a mere reduction, since it involves creative retelling where images replace extensively descriptive passages, thus allowing for a more efficient narrative structure.⁹²

Similarly, in the context of comic adaptations, Brigid Alverson presents the narrative contraction as a strategy to make complex texts more accessible to younger readers. Comics often divide longer stories into more manageable segments, which retains the essential elements of the narrative while engaging readers who might find the original text overwhelming. This method ensures that while the narrative is condensed, the primary themes and the story's essence remain intact, making it easier for new readers to engage with the material.⁹³

4.1.2 Visualization

The concept of visualization and intersemiotic transposition is another crucial element in the adaptation process. Møllegaard points out that comic adaptations leverage the medium's ability to merge images and text, creating a narrative that can convey complex themes visually. This kind of transposition involves translating the literary elements of a novel into visual symbols, which results in enhancement of the emotional and thematic depth of the story. The use of visual metaphors in comics often allows for a more immersive experience, which can sometimes communicate meaning more effectively than text alone.⁹⁴

In the narrative experiments and visual complexity introduced by Paul Buhle, this visual approach is further emphasized. According to him, comics are not just simplified retellings but a sophisticated works of art that experiment with narrative structures and visual styles. Buhle also points out that modern comics frequently employ a mix of traditional and innovative visual techniques to explore complex historical and social themes. This experimental approach enables comics to offer unique perspectives on history and narrative, making them a powerful medium for storytelling.⁹⁵

4.1.3 Fidelity

The issues of fidelity and creative reinterpretation are also a recurring theme in the adaptation of literary works into comics. Møllegaard emphasizes that comic adaptations are not always

⁹² Kirsten Møllegaard, "Graphic Novel Adaptations of Literature: Perspectives on Fidelity and Authorship," *The International Journal of Literary Humanities* 13, no. 4 (2015): 72–73.

⁹³ Brigid Alverson, "The Boom in Middle Grade Novels Turned Comics," *Publishers Weekly* 271, no. 10 (2024): 1–2.

⁹⁴ Møllegaard, "Graphic Novel Adaptations of Literature," 73–74.

⁹⁵ Paul Buhle, "History and Comics," *Reviews in American History* 35 (2007): 318.

faithful reproductions of their source material. Instead, they often reinterpret the original text, sometimes altering its meaning or emphasis. This process of creative reinterpretation is seen as a necessary adaptation to the comic medium, where visual and textual elements must work together to convey the story's essence in a way that resonates with contemporary audiences.⁹⁶

4.2 Differences from the Novel: Omissions in Characters

When it comes to the comic book series and the omissions, the only example of character omission is seen in the second comic book of the *Battle School* series, which portrays the events from chapters 4 “Launch” and 5 “Games.” However, the characters of Sergeant Dap and Mick, who play crucial roles in Ender's early experiences at Battle School, are entirely omitted in their respected scenes on pages 13–26 and 17–19. This omission reduces the complexity of Ender's interactions and the diversity of personalities he encounters during his training. The Command School series remains more faithful to the novel in terms of character and event representation, particularly in its second and third comic books. However, omissions are still evident, in the overall narrative structure.⁹⁷

4.3 Differences from the Novel: Changes

Both the Battle School and the Command School comics series introduce several changes in characters, events, and settings that deviate from the novel.

4.3.1 Changes in Characters

The first character change, or rather specification, occurs in the first comic book of the Battle School series, when the doctor who removes Ender's monitor on page 4 is depicted as male, whereas the novel does not specify the doctor's gender. Additionally, Valentine is portrayed with blonde, straight hair, as seen on page 11, a visual detail that differs from the novel, where her appearance is not disclosed.⁹⁸

The third comic book of the Battle School series, covering chapters 6 “The Giant's Drink” and 7 “Salamander” of the novel, introduces the second change done to the character of Alai by altering the farewell gesture between him and Ender on page 8, where it is depicted

⁹⁶ Møllegaard, “Graphic Novel Adaptations of Literature,” 74.

⁹⁷ Orson Scott Card, Christopher Yost, and Pasqual Ferry, *Ender's Game: Battle School #2* (New York: Marvel Publishing, January 2009), 13–26.

⁹⁸ Orson Scott Card, Christopher Yost, and Pasqual Ferry, *Ender's Game: Battle School #1* (New York: Marvel Publishing, December 2008), 4–11.

as a hug, while the novel describes it as a kiss on the cheek, a more intimate and symbolic gesture, which emphasizes the depth of friendship between the boys.⁹⁹

The third change of the character occurs in the first comic book of the Command School series on page 18, where Major Anderson is clearly depicted as an older, overweight white male, which is a contrast to the novel where his appearance is not extensively described beyond his gender.¹⁰⁰

The last change in the means of character depiction happens in the fourth comic book of the Command School series, which is summarizing chapters 13 “Valentine” and 14 “Ender’s Teacher.” On page 2, Mazer Rackham is shown without the facial tattoos described in the novel as part of his Maori heritage.¹⁰¹

4.3.2 Changes in Events

The first change regarding the events occurs in the first comic book of the Battle School series, in the scene portrayed on page 23, where Graff persuades Ender to join the Battle School. The conversation sequence is interrupted by images of previous Formic invasions, which alter the flow of the original dialogue.¹⁰²

The second change related to events is made by the replacement of the conversation between Major Anderson and Graff in the second comic book of the Battle School series, where it is substituted by a psychological report on Ender’s siblings, Peter and Valentine.¹⁰³

In the third comic book of the Battle School series, events are changed by the significant visual reduction of the mind game portrayal seen on pages 3–7, when Ender is playing only as a mouse.¹⁰⁴ The fourth comic book in the Battle School series continues the trend of replacing direct conversations with transcriptions, such as between Anderson and Graff, depicted on page 2.¹⁰⁵ The final comic book in the Battle School series depicts a conversation between Major Imbu and Graff as a video log, differing from the novel’s direct personal exchanges.¹⁰⁶

⁹⁹Orson Scott Card, Christopher Yost, and Pasqual Ferry, *Ender’s Game: Battle School #3* (New York: Marvel Publishing, April 2009), 8.

¹⁰⁰Orson Scott Card, Christopher Yost, and Pasqual Ferry, *Ender’s Game: Command School #1* (New York: Marvel Publishing, 2010), 18.

¹⁰¹Orson Scott Card, Christopher Yost, and Pasqual Ferry, *Ender’s Game: Command School #4* (New York: Marvel Publishing, 2010), 2.

¹⁰²Card, Yost, and Ferry, *Ender’s Game: Battle School #1*, 23.

¹⁰³Card, Yost, and Ferry, *Ender’s Game: Battle School #2*, 2.

¹⁰⁴Card, Yost, and Ferry, *Ender’s Game: Battle School #3*, 3–7.

¹⁰⁵Orson Scott Card, Christopher Yost, and Pasqual Ferry, *Ender’s Game: Battle School #4* (New York: Marvel Publishing, May 2009), 2.

¹⁰⁶Orson Scott Card, Christopher Yost, and Pasqual Ferry, *Ender’s Game: Battle School #5* (New York: Marvel Publishing, June 2009), 2.

The Command School series introduces the most crucial event changes in its final comic book, which covers chapter 15 “Speaker for the Dead” of the novel. The first change covers the great condensing of the time span on page 7, where Ender’s training, which lasts over 21 days is depicted on a single page.¹⁰⁷ The second, and the most radical event change in the fifth book of the Command School series is the depiction of ending on page 25, where Ender, after waking up from the sedation, is embraced by his friends in an outburst of joy, concluding the story on page 25. This contrasts sharply with the novel, where Ender seeks redemption when discovering the Formic queen’s cocoon and promising to find a new home for the Formics.¹⁰⁸

4.3.3 Changes in Setting

The only change in the setting was made in the second comic book of the Battle School series on page 11, where the Battle School itself is depicted without its iconic rotating segment containing the battle rooms. This alteration changes the visual representation and scale of Ender’s training environment.¹⁰⁹

4.4 Evaluation

The comic book adaptation of *Ender’s Game* presents a unique approach of retelling Orson Scott Card’s novel, using the visual and narrative capabilities of the comics medium. While it attempts to maintain the core essence of the original story, several significant omissions, character modifications, and event alterations highlight both the challenges and the creative liberties involved in the adaptation process.

One of the key aspects of this adaptation is the condensation of the plot, which is one of the typical comic medium limitations. The narrative is necessarily shortened, leading to the omission of certain secondary characters, such as Sergeant Dap and Mick in the Battle School series. These omissions, while simplifying the narrative, also reduce the complexity of Ender’s interactions and the broader context of his development within the Battle School. Additionally, the visual representation in the comics introduces changes to character appearances and settings, such as the depiction of Valentine with blonde straight hair and the omission of the Battle School’s rotating segment. These visual choices alter the

¹⁰⁷ Orson Scott Card, Christopher Yost, and Pasqual Ferry, *Ender’s Game: Command School #5* (New York: Marvel Publishing, 2010), 7.

¹⁰⁸ Card, Yost, and Ferry, *Ender’s Game: Command School #5*, 25.

¹⁰⁹ Card, Yost, and Ferry, *Ender’s Game: Battle School #2*, 11.

audience's perception of the story and its characters, sometimes simplifying or shifting the focus away from the novel's detailed descriptions.

The comics also introduce notable changes in specific events. For example, the adaptation condenses Ender's training period at Command Base, into a single page, significantly altering the pacing and perceived intensity of his preparation. Moreover, the conclusion of the comic series, where Ender is embraced by his friends in celebration, contrasts sharply with the novel's more introspective ending, where Ender seeks redemption by finding a new home for the unborn Formic queen. This shift from a reflective to a more celebratory tone fundamentally changes the thematic focus of the story's resolution.

Overall, the comic book adaptation of *Ender's Game* remains rather faithful to the original text within the constraints of the medium. However, the necessary plot condensation, combined with creative reinterpretations and omissions, results in a narrative that, while retaining the core elements of the novel, often simplifies or alters key aspects of the story. These changes reflect both the advantages and limitations of the comic medium, offering a more accessible but not so different version of Card's original work. This suggests that while the adaptation honours the spirit of the novel, it also tailors the story to fit the expectations and constraints of a different audience, thereby balancing fidelity with innovation.

CONCLUSION

When comparing the film and comic book adaptations of *Ender's Game* in terms of fidelity to the original novel, it becomes clear that each medium presents distinct challenges and opportunities, leading to different levels of adherence to Orson Scott Card's work.

The film adaptation, constrained by its limited runtime, condenses the narrative significantly. This results in the omission of entire subplots and characters, such as the Locke and Demosthenes storyline and characters like Shen and Rose the Nose. The film also alters key character arcs and simplifies the development of characters like Ender, who in the novel matures significantly over several years. These changes make the film more accessible but less faithful to the novel's depth and complexity. Additionally, the film's visual and auditory elements, while providing an immersive experience, often simplify or alter the settings and themes presented in the book, leading to a more streamlined but less nuanced narrative.

On the other hand, the comic book adaptation, despite also condensing the story, remains more faithful to the novel's structure. The serialized format allows for a more gradual unfolding of events, preserving more of the novel's complexity. The comics also stay closer to the original character portrayals, even though some visual changes, such as Valentine's appearance, do occur. The comics manage to retain much of the thematic depth of the novel, even if some narrative elements are simplified or visually condensed.

The analysis of the adaptations of *Ender's Game* novel reveals the complexity involved in translating a novel into different media formats. Both the film and comic book adaptations strive to remain faithful to Orson Scott Card's original narrative, yet they each introduce significant changes to accommodate the unique demands of their respective media.

In conclusion, while both adaptations achieve varying degrees of success in conveying the core elements of *Ender's Game*, they each offer a unique perspective on the story. The film provides an accessible and visually engaging interpretation, whereas the comic book retains more of the novel's intricacies and depth. Ultimately, these adaptations demonstrate that while the essence of a story can be preserved across different media, the process of adaptation inevitably involves creative reinterpretation and modification, reflecting both the strengths and limitations of each medium.

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