

# *Gaging "JoJo Rabbit " Skies*

## *- Film Deconstruction and Reshaping of Literature*

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**Abstract:** In contemporary film and television, many creative works use excellent literary works as the basis of adapted scripts. Many not-so-excellent literary works have been adapted into film and television works that the audience knows and loves. Adapting literary works into film and television has always occupied a significant position in film history. This article will compare *JoJo Rabbit* and the original novel *Gaging Skies* to explore the adaptation of movies based on literary works that align with human ethics in today's social environment and the successful deconstruction of literature by film. And reinvention. This article elaborates on the expression of the theme in *JoJo Rabbit* from multiple dimensions, such as the comparison between the script and the original work, the current situation of film adaptations, and the excellent use of audio-visual language in the film. Finally, a multi-angle comparison of the original novel and the film summarizes how the film deconstructs and reshapes the literary adaptation of the original work and the profound impact of scholarly works on adapters.

**Keywords:** *JoJo Rabbit*, *Gaging Skies*, Deconstruction and reconstruction, Film adaptation, Audio-visual language

## 1. Introduction

Film deconstruction and reshaping of literature involves the reinterpretation and analysis of literary works through the utilization of filmic expressions and narrative techniques [1]. This approach serves to enhance the dynamism and allure of initially static texts, enabling audiences to intuitively grasp the charm embedded within storylines and characters. In essence, adapting a film is not merely a matter of transposing words onto a screen; it represents an artistic endeavor that transcends traditional reading models, offering novel experiences while enriching our comprehension of the underlying connotations and meanings inherent in literary creations.

*JoJo Rabbit* exemplifies the art of deconstructing and reimagining literature through film. The director's contemplation on war is evident in the meticulous reshaping of both theme and content from *Gaging Skies*. By focusing on JoJo, a radical "little Nazi," as the central character, only one-third of the novel's narrative is adapted into the movie script. As JoJo uncovers his mother Rosie's secret hiding of a Jewish girl named Elsa, his journey unfolds with newfound comprehension towards both the Jewish race and Nazism. In contrast, the original novel *Gaging Skies* delves into young Jonas'

unconventional love for Elsa. It portrays Jonas' internal struggles extensively as he attains desired affection by confining a Jewish girl. Consequently, this clash between good and evil ultimately leads to Jonas losing Elsa forever at the story's conclusion.

Film adaptations of literary works often encounter numerous challenges, and the same holds true for *JoJo Rabbit*. The director's extensive research into the original novel enabled him to uncover the potential for adapting its story and essence, ultimately earning him the prestigious 92nd Oscar for Best Adapted Screenplay.

## **2. Deconstructing the importance of literary works in creating movies**

With the continuous development of film technology and the audience's demand for storylines, more and more books are beginning to be adapted into movies. Over the past few decades, book-to-film adaptations have emerged as an independent and essential industry. In addition to commercial considerations, adapting books into film also protects the original works and promotes reading culture to a certain extent. However, translating from books to movies is also challenging and needs to be clarified. How to be faithful to the original work? How do you balance the differences between the script and the director's interpretation of the storyline and characters? These have become problems that film practitioners need to work hard to solve.

## **3. Historical background of film adaptations of literary works**

Literary works have a long history of being adapted into films. Since the birth of cinema, people have begun to put classic literary works on the screen, reinterpreting storylines and characters through visual and sound expressions [2]. This history has a long history. As early as the early 20th century, many works of literary giants were adapted into silent films. However, the film significantly changed the original work due to technical limitations and other factors. With the advancement of science and technology and the development of film industrialization, directors use careful casting, set design, costume creation, and other means to reproduce the author's lifelike characters in front of the camera and present the storyline to the audience. At the same time, with the help of advanced special effects technology and the skillful skills of excellent camera operators, the audience can feel as if they are in the fantasy or real world depicted in the novel [3]. Overall, the history of literary works being adapted into movies not only witnesses the mutual inspiration and exchange between the two art forms but also makes the audience realize that each version results from the creator's diverse interpretation of the same theme and gives it new charm.

## **4. Challenges and opportunities**

As an essential source of inspiration for the creation of film scripts and stories, literary works significantly impact the film's role. First, literary works can provide rich and diverse storylines and characters, providing film creators with a broad space for imagination. Second, literary works' unique and wonderful language expressions also bring novelty and artistry to movies. During the adaptation process, film creators can use the vivid and detailed features of the original novel to shape the character image and transform these unique features into something visually impressive, aurally pleasing, or make people think about problems—resonance and other elements [4]. However, not all originals are perfect. In this case, creators need to reconstruct a story framework that is consistent with current ethical values and can attract the audience's attention. This is undoubtedly a more significant challenge. Therefore, in today's film industry, "recreation" has become a phenomenon that presents opportunities and challenges. *JoJo Rabbit* is one of the typical cases. The film's director used a very different story structure and narrative technique from the original novel *Gaging Skies*, and improved the theme connotation while adapting it. This "recreation" is a renovation of the original

story and a reflection on the current social state. And reflection on concepts. The director successfully set the children's characters in a specific historical background and introduced fantasy elements to express the children's true inner feelings.

## 5. Reprocessing of artistic plots under anti-war themes

Director Taika Waititi successfully adapted the original novel *Gaging Skies* into the movie *JoJo Rabbit* by deconstructing and reshaping it. This work cleverly presents the story from a children's perspective. Anti-war theme incorporates elements of black humor. The director used different artistic techniques to recreate Jonas's self-fantasy in the original novel in the details of the film so that the audience can feel this fantasy more intuitively. It is worth mentioning that the director has injected elements of self-awareness into the film, and by reimagining and creating the storyline and characters, the entire work has more depth and connotation. The director cleverly transformed the complex emotional expressions in the original novel, such as the coexistence of fiction and reality, into visual language, giving the audience a brand new and shocking experience in audio and video.

## 6. Similarities and differences between movie stories, narratives, and novels

Although the story background of the movie and the novel occurred at the end of World War II, the director needed to give a specific location for where the story took place. This blurring method allows the audience to connect the storyline to any European city, thus better showing the tension throughout Europe at the time and the terrifying atmosphere brought about by the war. Unlike the novel, which clearly states that the story takes place in Vienna, Austria, and the merger of Austria and Germany as the plot progresses, the movie does not explain the specific location in detail. Through such a vague approach, the director intends to highlight the tense atmosphere prevalent throughout the European continent and the horror brought about by the war [5]. At the same time, there are also significant differences in the timeline. The protagonist, JoJo, concentrated on his growth stage in the movie when he was about 10 years old. The director focused the story on JoJo's growth stage to highlight the protagonist's psychological changes and the gradual deepening of his understanding of war. Although the film presents a series of surprising, interesting, and engaging events, they need to be more specific to the viewer. From the beginning of a carefree life without the ravages of war to the final outbreak of war and its end, these events could not have occurred in just one year or less. Therefore, the director used clever techniques to blur the entire timeline and focus on the growth experience of the protagonist, JoJo. In contrast, in the novel, Jonas experiences a normal and logical timeline change from 15 or 16 years old to his 20s. This arrangement can better express the characters' moods and allow readers to follow Jonas and Elsa more closely as they move toward change.

Although there are considerable differences in timelines between the movie and the original novel, they both use a way of narrating the plot as the war progresses. However, the vital difference between the two is also reflected in the director's deconstruction and re-creation of the original work. In contrast, the novel focuses more on describing Jonas' abnormal love affair with the imprisoned Elsa. The male protagonist became mentally disabled after being crippled in an air raid and gradually fell into a state of self-destruction. "Gaging" means not only that Jonas has restricted Elsa's freedom but also that he has restricted the expression of his innermost feelings and desires. The film reshapes the relationship between Elsa and JoJo through adaptation, allowing it to explore adult anti-war thinking from a child's perspective. In the novel, they stay together for warmth; in the movie, they become dependent on each other, face difficult moments together, and gradually establish a family-like connection and emotional bond. Although both have deceitful behaviors, JoJo, in the movie, finally chooses to be kind and achieves transformation by changing his ideas. At the same time, in the novel, Jonas finally reaches the worst ending due to his weak character. *JoJo Rabbit* explores adult anti-war

thinking issues from a child's perspective and conveys values such as positivity, hope, and courage by reshaping character relationships and endings.

## 7. Transformation of plot elements into visual art

In the novel, Jonas's psychological activities are described very richly. By expressing his inner thoughts and feelings, readers can have a deeper understanding of the protagonist Jonas's personality and growth process. These descriptions show his questioning and thinking about social order and moral concepts and his hesitation and entanglement when facing difficulties. The director skillfully used this plot in the movie to create JoJo's best friend-"Hitler". In the original novel, Hitler only exists in the story's background, explaining his influence on the younger generation. In the movie, Hitler's concrete image gives the black humor part more vivid and exciting elements. As a character imagined and embodied by JoJo, Hitler is not serious but has a lot of comedy. Whenever JoJo is confused or needs comfort, he appears and is visible only to JoJo. Hitler's humor aligns with the characteristics that all children hope to have in their fantasy characters. At the same time, it also shows JoJo's innocence and childlike charm from the side. It is worth noting that the director carefully handled one detail to show JoJo's growth and experience in a war environment. At the film's beginning, the director set up JoJo as a little boy who could not even tie his shoelaces and had to be helped by his mother, Rosie, every time. After his mother was executed, he could not even help his dead mother tie her shoes and tidy up her appearance, but in the end, he was able to help Elsa tie her shoes. This ingenious design allows the audience to feel that JoJo has gradually grown up and become strong and brave under the baptism of war.

In addition, the director wanted to reflect on the war through a child's perspective, and color adjustment became an essential means of stimulating the audience's visual senses. The film does not use one color as the basis for color matching but switches the colors to fit the protagonist JoJo's changes in mood as she grows up. At the beginning of the film, when introducing the relationship between the characters and showing us JoJo's happy childhood and relatively peaceful life, the director used warm yellow as the overall tone of the picture. This yellow color is more like the color of the earth that breeds new life, and it is nurturing the new life of JoJo. As the story progresses, JoJo discovers Elsa's existence and the secret of her mother, Rosie. At this time, the overall picture slowly changes from yellow to green. This part of the film contains many tender scenes of Rosie and JoJo's previous life as mother and son. Rosie's teachings to JoJo also change JoJo's state of mind. At this time, JoJo is like a bud breaking through the soil, feeling the sunshine, struggling to do photosynthesis, and growing wildly. Gradually, the war in the story entered its final stage, and the situation became increasingly tense. However, the director turned the picture blue, making it look depressing and cold. At this time, JoJo ushered in the "heavy rain" in his life. He forever lost his mother, Rosie, who loved and protected him. What is worth noting is that at this time, the director was following JoJo and did not directly go to film Rosie being executed. JoJo chases the butterfly and stops in the frame. The camera moves up as JoJo stands up, and Rosie's shoes appear. This kind of picture is dull but has a potent impact. At the end of the story, JoJo grows up to be a kind and strong child with independent judgment. The director's picture transitions from blue to orange, which not only echoes the initial tone, everything returns to dullness, but also shows that after the "heavy rain," the sun reappears, and the buds slowly grow into budding flowers.

## 8. Conclusion

The successful adaptation of JoJo Rabbit gave film creators ideas about sustainable adaptation work and provided them with more opportunities to explore the potential of the original literary work. When adapting a film, it is optional to choose a very successful best-selling book or a novel with a

sufficiently reasonable story frame as the original work. The key is that the adapter must be determined to create new meanings in the recent time and space [6]. Today, in contemporary society, no matter whether the original work is good or bad, it cannot be an obstacle to the progress of the creators but should be regarded as an opportunity. Creators need to have the ability to reshape the structure of the original work, the ability to create independently, and the blessing of self-awareness elements to create a successful movie or TV series. However, the research case pointed out in this article is too single, and the method is too simple. It can only comparatively analyze the differences between the original work and the movie without establishing a control group for in-depth investigation. In the future, we will still see many adaptations based on literary works in the film and television industry, and this method will still be trendy and practical. Therefore, practitioners must think more seriously about rationalizing and optimizing literary works and presenting excellent script content. This requires relevant researchers to establish a more systematic, comprehensive, highly scientific, and practical research model and conduct more systematic investigations and analyses of the control group to arrive at a rationalized framework for adapting literary works and satisfying the market—demand plan. In short, *JoJo Rabbit* successfully tells us that as long as we have the right attitude and method to tap the potential and give it new meaning, classic stories can be given new life in any form.

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