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Dear Megan,

This essay is off to a great start! You do especially well here overall with arrangement, points of difference, and some good, developing analysis.

However, your thesis still needs slight development, you lack the evidence needed to prove that all of your points of difference are actually the case, and much of your analysis will need to go deeper and further explain your conclusions (in order to prove your thesis). You will also need more research to contextualize your argument; you need a total of six sources, including the two primary sources (book and movie).

Please carefully read all marginal comments for help with how to improve your essay and resolve the above-mentioned issues. As this was already a very strong start, this will be your one opportunity for revision before this essay is graded. Therefore, if you have any questions, would like clarification on any of this revision guidance, or would otherwise like additional instructional support as you revise this essay, please don't hesitate to contact the school.

Instructor (VGG)
Penn Foster

The Host

Perhaps one of the greatest challenges a filmmaker faces is to take a famous novel with a devoted fan base and translate that novel into 90 minutes of scintillating cinema that will win new fans while satisfying old ones. Thus, while film-goers often experience ~~the a~~ disconcerting, ~~and~~ distancing effect ~~of the movie's~~ due to many movies' lack of logical coherence, novel readers ~~invest~~ ~~because they~~ take the slow, painful journey with the ~~characters~~ are receive more clarity.

This is precisely what director; Andrew Niccol, endeavors to do in *The Host*, Niccol's 2013 film adaptation of Stephanie Meyer's novel of the same name. Niccol's film preserves the essence of Meyer's plot, its focus on the complex love quadrangle between Jared and Melanie and Ian and Wanda who is also called Wanderer's, a parasitic alien being who has taken over Melanie's body. The supernatural elements characteristic of Meyer's fiction inevitably are front-and-center in Niccol's film adaptation as well. The characters inhabit a dystopian, post-apocalyptic world in which the human race is slowly being expunged by armies of alien invaders, called "Souls", who, having deemed humans unworthy of the lives and the planet they have been given, overtake host human

Commented [A1]: This is not a fully-developed introduction. And where is your thesis? The intro must indicate your specific topic (after doing a general lead-in like this), and your thesis should be the last sentence of the intro.

Commented [A2]: Fix your arrangement. Niccol tries to "translate the novel into 90 minutes of..." NOT create and disconcerting, distancing effect. But, since the second ideas is what you most recently said about movies, readers will likely be confused here.

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bodies and erase their consciousness in the process. In both Meyer's novel and Niccol's film, the protagonist, Melanie, proves to be an exception to the general rule of human frailty in this shattered world. Niccol captures the strength and indomitability which Meyer's novel infuses into the character of Melanie, the only human host ever to succeed in resisting the alien's attempt to erase her consciousness. In this, then, Niccol succeeds in creating an entertaining work of cinema, one that honors the spirit of Meyer's novel, even if it falls short of its scope and depth. It is this shortfall, however, which makes the film far inferior to the novel.

Perhaps the most significant and, for the film, the most detrimental difference between the novel and the movie is the differences in the construction of the plot and the impact this has on plot development in the film. In the film, unlike in the book, Melanie and Wanderer's relationship is built through flashbacks and voiceovers by Melanie. In the book, the relationship between the two is developed quite slowly and very deliberately through an unfolding narrative of the overtaking of the earth by Wanderer's people and very effective storytelling, with Melanie fighting for her "life" inside Wanderer's head, giving feedback and protesting every memory of her life on earth that surfaces and becomes available to Wanderer. In the film however, it is more quickly established by rather disjointedly-placed flashbacks of Jared (Melanie's lover) and Melanie together, coupled with often angry voiceovers by Melanie as her past resurfaces into Wanderer's mind. Although the method used in the movie allows a more personal take on the struggle between Melanie and Wanderer for dominance in Melanie's body, the method utilized in the book allows the reader to understand more about both Wanderer and her people, as well as about Melanie, and this is done simultaneously. Unfortunately, although the creators were obviously striving to "mesh" the two personalities more quickly, to further these ends, they were forced to leave out vital information about Wanderer's people that helped to make more sense out of the invasion and their methods of takeover.

Another important distinction between the plot developments of the novel versus that of the

Commented [A4]: Shorten this summary. You can make this information much more brief while still getting the general ideas across. Then, save specifics for when they are needed as parts of arguments in your body paragraphs.

Commented [A5]: Falls short of the scope and depth in what ways?

Commented [A6]: Inferior in what specific way? Your thesis is headed in a good direction but needs development. Specify what differences (plot? Character? Etc.) cause the novel to have less "scope and depth" than the movie, and explain what you mean by those two terms. Most importantly, specify your argument. The movie is inferior to the book IN WHAT SPECIFIC WAY as a result of all the differences that cause reduced scope / depth? If you want to argue the movie is inferior in a variety of different ways, then revise your thesis to make that clear. If you want to argue that the movie is inferior to the book in one specific way, make that clear.

Commented [A7]: So, it sounds like the difference here is not PLOT but narrative point of view. In the film, it is first-person (Melanie) and flashbacks—correct? What is the perspective in the book? An outside, unnamed, third-person narrator? Omniscient? Semi-omniscient? Specify.

Commented [A8]: Good start on analysis, but you first need some evidence to explain the difference more thoroughly BEFORE you move on to analysis.

Commented [A9]: Okay—so, what is the FINAL analysis here? That the added context in the book, given through the third-person narrative frame, allows readers to better understand the context of the invasion? And so what? How does that make the book better? You have actually stated the movie is more emotional / allows a personal take, which many people might argue is better. So, you need more analysis here to prove your own point—that the book is still better, and in what specific way (as a result of having more context).

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film is in the treatment of the backstory, the exposition. In the movie, as opposed to the book, readers learn very little of the history of Wanderers as a race. In the book, Wanderer (also called Wanda) is not just a Traveler among her people, but also a Historian who is so respected that she has been given an honorary professor's position among her people. She keeps the history of their race within her. In the book, one of the major ways that smooths Wanda's way into being assimilated and accepted into the "wild" human's community is the hours that she spends in the kitchen and dining area with members of the group, through which she is able to share the history of her people as well as tales of her travels. The humans are intensely fascinated by her and ask endless questions about her people, herself in particular and the worlds on which she has lived as well as the effect the invasion of the Souls had on each one of them. This very important section of the book is almost totally left out in the movie, leaving a gaping hole in the audience's knowledge of this invading race. In the novel, Wanda's evening sharing of memories allows the readers to learn, along with the characters in the book, some of the history and experiences of what it is like to be a Soul. It serves to give some insight to the goals and motives of this alien race. This knowledge provides an awareness of how things are perceived from the "other side," enabling readers to better empathize with a character like Wanderer/Wanda.

The use of flashbacks and voiceover narration in Niccol's film adaptation, combined with the necessity of excising a great deal of material from Meyer's epic text, also have had an extremely damaging effect on character development in the film. In the film, character development is rushed and, frequently, incoherent, and unconvincing. Typical of Stephanie Meyer's style, in the novel, even the side characters are fully fleshed out and show the depth and range of human emotion. The relationships formed by the characters are created and explored fully, even the strange combination of the mutual love affair between the human, Ian, and the Wanderer, the alien in for a time inhabiting Melanie's body. In the film, only the characters of Wanderer and Melanie show any real depth. They do not evolve as the plot progresses, nor do they exhibit any sign of an interior, reflective life. This

Commented [A10]: How much is "very little"? Give specifics and evidence.

Commented [A11]: Okay—and what is the problem with the movie viewers not having this knowledge of the invading race? Does it cause them to feel differently about Wanda in some way?

Commented [A12]: So? What is the effect?

Commented [A13]: Good! But connect back to your thesis. Explain how this, in turn, makes the book better OVERALL in some specific way.

Commented [A14]: Give examples to prove your point.

Commented [A15]: Provide evidence / examples to prove this point.

Commented [A16]: Evidence?

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is especially apparent in the treatment of the romances themselves. In a love story as convoluted as that between a human, Ian, and an alien parasite, Wanderer, one would imagine that surprise, conflict, and fear would feature strongly into the characters' discovery of their romantic feelings. Meyer's novel chronicles this well, but Niccol's film at best glosses these elements and, at worst, excludes them entirely. The romances become rushed and artificial in the novel, clichéd plot points designed to move the action forward, as opposed to a true examination of the nature and complexity of romantic love, as in Meyer's novel.

Because not as many character traits are revealed in the movie, the audience does not have the chance to 'know' the characters as well as they are allowed to through the book. The more characterization that is present, in any form of media, the more well-rounded and complex the characters will be. This increases the audience's sense of identification with the characters, allowing readers and film-goers to relate to and invest in the characters and their fate. In contrast, characters that are not well-developed, like most of the characters in Niccol's film, will come off as flat and stereotyped, uninteresting clichés that audiences are not moved by or interested in. In his analysis of the psychoanalytic roots of audience investment in the action film genre, Pope writes,

From a ritual perspective, it is apparent that part of the global appeal of some Hollywood action films lies in their giving body to forces that currently overwhelm both individuals and their nation-states, and, concomitantly, to protagonists who do spectacular and courageous battle with these forces. (128)

Unfortunately, Niccol's film fails to provide such protagonists. Audiences are not provided in the movie with the same depth of emotion, experience, or conflict that the novel provides. The "forces" that the characters—and, by extension, the audience—are contending with are perfunctorily addressed (i.e. Ian's conflict in falling in love with Wanderer) if they are addressed at all. The result is a deficiency of character development which does not permit audiences to witness the characters' "spectacular and courageous battles" so essential to audience identification and investment.

Commented [A17]: Evidence?

Commented [A18]: Evidence?

Commented [A19]: Evidence?

Commented [A20]: Examples / evidence?

Commented [A21]: If all of these claims are true, then your analysis will work well. But, as you have no actual evidence or examples, you simply express your opinion without actual proof, which is not an effective way to prove your points to readers who may not automatically agree with you (within your general, mixed audience).

Commented [A22]: All of this is generally true. But, without first proving that the movie DOES NOT develop the characters as well as the book, this information will not yet help you prove your thesis.

Commented [A23]: Good connection / use of evidence to help your analysis. But, again, you would need to provide evidence first proving that the assumptions on which this analysis is based (that the movie does NOT provide developed, empathetic protagonists and other characters) is true.

Commented [A24]: Evidence? In what way ARE they addressed? Why is it not deep / complex enough (or as deep as the movie)?

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Another important aspect in which the novel supersedes the film in regard to characterization is in the fact that the book makes the takeover much more of a personal story than ~~does~~ the movie does. In the book, readers are treated to the personal thoughts of Wanderer as she awakes in a strange body with emotions she has never felt the like of before. Readers are privy to her inner thoughts as she struggles with Melanie's consciousness and to Melanie's anger and determination to keep her family safe and secret. Knowledge of the depth of the bond of love between Jared and Melanie and her love for her little brother, Jamie, is bestowed on readers vividly in the book. Both Melanie's and Wanderer's turmoil as they exist with the "wild" humans are made clear. Readers are keenly aware that Wanderer, now Wanda, is forming bonds of affection with these humans, thanks, in part, from the emotions that are now "hers" because Melanie is a part of her.

In the movie, on the other hand, audiences never even learn of Wanderer's initial reaction to being human and, though her struggle with Melanie is addressed via voiceover, it simply does not translate to the movie with the power that is present in the book. Most of Wanderer's (Wanda's) thoughts and feelings as she struggles to fit in with the "wild" humans is touched on only superficially in the movie. The differences between how the book versus the movie is able to portray these aspects of the characters' inner lives were, perhaps, unavoidable. There is only so much that dream sequences, flashbacks, and voiceovers can do. The depth of empathy created in the book between the main character(s), Melanie and Wanda, is not easily translatable to the big screen. Unfortunately, however, the lack of access to these thoughts and emotions greatly influences the bond of attachment the reader/audiences is able to form with the characters. While the movie is able to get audiences to like Wanderer and want things to turn out well for her, they simply do not have the opportunity to experience the intensity of that bond supplied in the book.

Because of the lack of plot and character development in the film, there is also a decided lack of logic in the film when compared to the novel. For example, Melanie's and Wanderer's relationship shifts from rivalry to friendship much more rapidly in the film than in the novel. When

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Commented [A25]: Example? Can you provide quotes / wording from the novel as evidence here?

Commented [A26]: Why not? Did the movie not portray this in some other way? Examine more deeply, and provide evidence.

Commented [A27]: Why not? Provide specific evidence. What DOES happen when Wanderer first inhabits Melanie's body? What is shown? What is said?

Commented [A28]: HOW is it touched upon?

Commented [A29]: How much more rapidly?

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Wanderer's Soul is inserted into Melanie and Melanie becomes aware of what has happened, she expresses a deep hatred of not just Wanderer, but all Souls. She lets this hatred be known very loudly from within the mind that, according to what the Souls believe, is now supposed to be exclusively Wanderer's. When Wanderer realizes that Melanie has not and apparently will not disappear as she "should," she is quite frightened of this overwhelmingly strong human personality that still resides within a body that should be hers alone. This is evident in the novel when the seemingly invincible Wanderer finds herself realizing, "You never know how much time you'll have" (Ch. 8). The Souls have the capacity to extend their existence indefinitely, provided they can find a healthy host to inhabit, but Melanie's resistance unsettles everything the Wanderer believes, shaking her faith in her own abilities, her own survival. In the novel, this lays the groundwork for the slow emergence of the friendship between Melanie and Wanderer, one based upon a growing (and mutual) respect and understanding.

The film, however, cannot trace the gradual evolution of that relationship, so the leap from enemies to friends is illogical and unconvincing. This being a major aspect that concerns the development of the main character(s) of the book and the movie, this transition from adversaries to friends is crucial to the story. Stephanie Meyer has created Wanderer as almost a sympathetic character and writes in a way that makes readers sympathize with her. Melanie is the obvious victim, a member of the human race who has been invaded. With her, readers readily empathize.

The leap from enemies to friends is made more difficult in the book by the love triangle Melanie and Wanderer find themselves in, with Ian being in love with Wanderer (who is in Melanie's body) and Jared being (still) in love with Melanie, whom he cannot see or communicate with, but whom he knows is there. In the novel, readers are better able to trace the trajectory of each character's complex emotional life, the evolution of his/her feelings. This also enables Meyer's novel to avoid the logical inconsistencies so readily apparent in Niccols' film. Readers get to see how Wanderer and Melanie forge a slow, tortured path toward friendship through their mutual

Commented [A30]: The context is not clear here. What does this phrase have to do with showing Melanie's hatred?

Commented [A31]: Okay—but how does this show the timeframe is longer for Melanie and Wanderer learning to get along?

Commented [A32]: How so? Explain further.

Commented [A33]: How quickly does it happen? At what moment? Why is that moment not sufficient to explain the switch? You need more evidence and analysis here.

Commented [A34]: But then how is the movie worse in this way? Complete the analysis.

Commented [A35]: Run-on sentence.

Commented [A36]: Why? How? Give explanation and evidence.

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dependence on one another and through the inevitable and unsurpassed intimacy of sharing a body.

Thus, while film-goers experience the disconcerting and distancing effect of the movie's lack of logical coherence, novel readers invest because they take the slow, painful journey with the characters. What is illogical in the film seems almost inevitable in the novel because, over time, readers come to like both the protagonists, Melanie and Wanderer, and to crave a good outcome for them both. This is seemingly impossible, as Meyer structures her plot, because the survival of one hinges upon the death of the other. Because Meyer's readers have been given the time—and plot and character development—to learn to care about Melanie and Wanderer, the drama of the plot's major conflict is heightened.

Though both the novel and the film explore important themes concerning identity and mortality, love and strength, Meyer's novel is far more effective and far more engrossing. Meyer possesses a keen ability to create a rich and sweeping storyline, to invest even minor characters with a deep and complex inner life, and to render logically coherent supernatural plots that could easily lapse into illogical absurdities. Unfortunately, Niccols, as film director, does not have the luxury of 800 pages to tell this story. In shrinking Meyer's epic down to two-hour film, Niccols inadvertently strips the story of its power, ~~at the expense of the~~ thus losing much of the audiences' ~~enamored love~~ of Meyer's book, ~~or eager for a new sci-fi romance.~~

Commented [A37]: Again, where is your evidence that this is done less well in the movie?

Commented [A38]: Do not repeat exact wording from your intro. Also, your transition here should be about your particular book, not books vs. movie in general.

Commented [A39]: Wait—this is not your conclusion? This paragraph is confusing, as it summarizes info (rather than presents a new point) but is not your conclusion. Integrate some of these ideas into your conclusion paragraph below, and remove any repetitive / general info.

Works Cited

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