

VAMPIRE TRANSFORMATION: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE NOVEL AND FILM *DRACULA*

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Abstract

This article aimed to explore the intersection between comparative literature and adaptation studies, examining the theoretical frameworks and practical applications that underlie this fascinating field. By analysing the transformation of a classic work into various media, we will uncover the mechanisms of change and the cultural significance embedded in these adaptations. This article examines the film adaptation of Bram Stoker's novel *Dracula* by Francis Ford Coppola. A comparative analysis is conducted on the novel and film to identify significant changes that occurred in the adaptation process. These changes include the addition of scenes, character modifications, and changes to the plot. One of the main changes is the addition of a romantic element between Dracula and Mina, which is not present in the original novel. This change transforms the theme of gothic horror into a more nuanced tragic love story. The study concludes that the film adaptation of Bram Stoker's *Dracula* involves a number of significant changes that alter the meaning and experience of the narrative. Further research is needed to understand the motivations and impact of changes in the adaptation process, especially from a cultural and sociological perspective. In addition, a broader comparative study could be conducted by comparing different adaptations of *Dracula* to see the patterns of change that occur over time. It is also important to understand how changes in adaptation affect audience reception. Adaptation research methodology needs to be continuously developed by integrating digital humanities approaches and new technologies to provide a more comprehensive perspective. More systematic documentation of the decision-making process in adaptation is also needed to understand the factors that influence changes from novel to film, so as to provide deeper insight into the process of adapting literary works to visual media.

Keyword: comparative literature, adaptation studies, transformation, character, plot

INTRODUCTION

Comparative literature and adaptation studies offer a rich and dynamic field of inquiry, where the exploration of narrative transformations across cultures and time periods reveals profound insights into the human experience. Nurrachman, et al. (2019) state that culture encompasses thoughts, intellect, customs, matters related to civilization and progress, as well as habits within a society. This Comparative Literature definition that addresses culture supports an interdisciplinary approach in this study, allowing for the integration of insights from anthropology, sociology, and other disciplines relevant to cultural studies. This interdisciplinary field examines the connections between literary works from various cultures, languages, and historical periods, creating a complex web of stories that highlight common themes and cultural influences. Comparative literature is

an interdisciplinary field dedicated to examining literary works across different cultures. It emphasizes the study of connections and intertextual relationships that extend beyond national and temporal boundaries, highlighting the importance of exploring patterns of linkage in literature over time and across diverse cultural contexts (Bassnett, 1993:1).

Bram Stoker's "Dracula" (1897) stands as a monumental work that revolutionized gothic horror literature and permanently embedded vampires in popular culture. Like a master weaver working with threads of Victorian anxieties, Stoker crafted a complex narrative told through letters, diary entries, and newspaper articles, following Jonathan Harker's fateful journey to Transylvania and the subsequent reign of terror unleashed by Count Dracula in England. Nearly a century later, Francis Ford Coppola's 1992 film adaptation, "Bram Stoker's Dracula," approached this gothic tapestry with a different artistic vision. Much like a skilled restoration artist who both preserves and reinterprets a classical painting, Coppola maintained the core elements of Stoker's narrative while infusing it with a tragic romantic subplot and lavish visual imagery. The film transformed the primarily horror-driven story into a gothic romance, weaving together themes of eternal love, redemption, and damnation in ways that diverged significantly from its source material.

Adaptation plays a vital role within this discipline, involving the transformation of an identifiable work or set of works from one medium into another. Adaptation as a process that explicitly reinterprets and reshapes a previously recognized work or collection of works (Hutcheon, 2012:37). This process involves a series of decisions regarding which elements to retain, modify, or discard, aiming to capture the essence of the original narrative within a new medium. In the ever-evolving digital era, adaptive art has undergone a significant transformation with the emergence of innovative new mediums for interpreting works from one form to another. Social media platforms featuring short video formats, such as TikTok and Instagram Reels, enable the adaptation of lengthy narratives into brief yet engaging content. Priyawan *et al.* (2020) contend that audience feedback, reflected through comments and ratings on these platforms, reveals instances of industry manipulation, cautioning viewers about potential deception by the media. Adaptation extends beyond books and films, encompassing various forms such as theatrical productions, video games, and even theme park attractions. Each medium introduces distinct challenges and opportunities, offering innovative ways for audiences to experience stories anew.

Melodrama often comes from a sense of injustice and chaos and then affirms a good moral order. Hendrajat (2023) stated that melodramas often start from a sense of injustice and chaos. The genre remains popular because it depicts moral or philosophical principles through good and evil characters. Classical works remain popular because they depict moral or philosophical principles working in the lives of good and evil characters. Classic work, as melodrama, such as Bram Stoker's "Dracula," have been reborn into popular culture through numerous adaptations. As Rapetti (2020) points out about adaptation, a space for exploration that is relevant to modern audiences. Stoker's "Dracula" as a classic laid the foundations for the modern vampire genre and offers insight into the social and cultural anxieties of the Victorian era. The novel's strength lies in its incorporation of gothic horror elements and the exploration of universal themes such as sexuality, xenophobia, and the conflict between tradition and modernity. The ongoing relevance of the novel is reflected in the various new adaptations and interpretations that continue to emerge, as well as in academic studies that analyze this work through a variety of contemporary lenses. These iterations not only preserve the original narrative but also reinvent it to resonate with contemporary audiences. For instance, modern adaptations of "Dracula" often explore themes such as forbidden desire or environmental destruction, while maintaining the core elements of the original story. This process creates a ripple effect, influencing other works and spawning entire subgenres within popular culture.

The future of comparative literature and adaptation studies is particularly significant in an increasingly interconnected world. The importance of comparative literature

studies and adaptations in the current era of globalization and digital interconnectivity is supported by several relevant articles and journals such as Damrosch, D. (2020) which states that the exploration of the future of comparative literature in a global context, emphasizes the importance of a multidisciplinary and cross-cultural approach. Another researcher, Meiner, C., & Veel, K. (2021) discusses how narratives migrate across cultural and media boundaries, which is particularly relevant to the study of contemporary adaptation and comparative literature. Regarding the adaptation process, it affects our understanding of comparative literature in the global era. The study of comparative and adaptive literature continues to evolve to respond to the challenges and opportunities that arise from globalization and interconnectivity. Comparative and adaptive literature emphasizes the importance of an interdisciplinary approach, awareness of the global context, and an understanding of how new technologies and media affect the production and reception of literary works. Research-researchers.

New technologies are opening up exciting possibilities for adaptation, and understanding how stories travel across cultures and mediums is crucial. Comparative literature and adaptation studies offer a unique lens through which to view our shared cultural heritage, reminding us that stories are living, breathing entities that evolve with us. As we continue to tell and retell these tales, we are not just preserving them – we are actively shaping our cultural narrative.

This article aims to explore the intersections of comparative literature and adaptation studies, examining the theoretical frameworks and practical applications that underpin this fascinating field. By analysing the transformations of classic works into various media, we will uncover the mechanisms of change and the cultural significance embedded within these adaptations. This inquiry will provide insights into the dynamic nature of storytelling and its role in shaping our collective cultural heritage.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Comparative and adapted literary theories have undergone significant development in recent years, with an increasingly broad and interdisciplinary focus. Rajewsky (2020) argues that contemporary comparative literature must go beyond traditional boundaries and embrace transmedia and cross-cultural approaches. Her research shows how comparative literature can broaden its scope to analyze not only written texts, but also film adaptations, visual arts, and even digital media.

In the context of adaptation theory, Hutcheon and O'Flynn (2023) emphasize the importance of considering cultural and historical context in the adaptation process. They propose a more nuanced analysis model, which not only focuses on direct comparisons between resources and adaptation, but also considers external factors that influence the adaptation process.

Adaptation theory has evolved significantly from its early focus on fidelity criticism to embrace more nuanced approaches to understanding how narratives transform across media. Linda Hutcheon's seminal work "A Theory of Adaptation" (2012) fundamentally reconceptualized adaptation as a creative and interpretive act rather than a mere reproduction. She argues that adaptations should be viewed as "autonomous works that can be interpreted and evaluated as such" rather than through the limiting lens of faithfulness to their source material. This perspective has been particularly influential in understanding how films adapt literary works, acknowledging that each medium has its own conventions, strengths, and limitations that necessarily shape the storytelling process.

Building on this theoretical foundation, Julie Sanders' concept of appropriation and adaptation provides a useful framework for analyzing how stories evolve across different cultural and medial contexts. Sanders distinguishes between adaptation, which signals a relationship with an informing source text, and appropriation, which effects a more decisive journey away from the source into a wholly new cultural product. This

theoretical distinction proves particularly relevant when examining Coppola's adaptation of "Dracula," which simultaneously maintains clear connections to Stoker's novel while introducing significant new elements that respond to contemporary cultural sensibilities. Recent theoretical developments, as discussed by Leitch (2022), have further expanded this framework by incorporating insights from cultural studies and media theory, suggesting that adaptations should be understood not just as translations between media,

Table 1 Data of Adaptation in Bram Stoker's *Dracula*

No	Quotes		Element
	Novel	Film	
1		Dracula turns away MINA: Sir, it is I who have been rude. If you are looking... DRACULA: Please, permit me to introduce myself. I am Prince Vlad of Szekely. MINA: A prince, no less? DRACULA: I am your servant. MINA: Wilhelmina Murray. DRACULA: I am honored, Madame Mina. MINA: This way. (47:05-47:50)	Additions
2		MEANWHILE In the restaurant Dracula awaits Mina's arrival Enter Waitor He hands a note to Dracula NOTE FROM MINA TO PRINCE VLAD: VLAD: My dearest Prince, forgive me. I have received word from my iancé in Romania. I am en route to join him. We are to be married. I will never see you again. Mina. (1:14:45-1:15:08)	Additions
3	She shuddered and was silent, holding down her head on her husband's breast. When she raised it, his white night-robe was stained with blood where her lips had touched, and where the thin open wound in her neck had sent forth drops. The instant she saw it she drew back, with a low wail, and whispered, amidst choking sobs:—"Unclean, unclean! I must touch him or kiss him no more. Oh, that it should be that it is I who am now his worst enemy, and whom he may have most cause to fear." (Stoker, 1897:431)	MINA: No! You murdered Lucy! (She collapses in his arms) I love you. Oh, God forgive me, I do. I want to be what you are, see what you see, love what you love. DRACULA: Mina, to walk with me, you must die to your breathing life and be reborn to mine. MINA: You are my love and my life always. DRACULA: Then I give you life eternal, everlasting love, the power over the storm and the beasts of the earth. Walk with me to be my loving wife forever. MINA: I will. Yes, yes. (1:38:09-1:39:46)	Substractions

4	<p>He must, indeed, have been that Voivode Dracula who won his name against the Turk, over the great river on the very frontier of Turkey-land. If it be so, then was he no common man; for in that time, and for centuries after, he was spoken of as the cleverest and the most cunning, as well as the bravest of the sons of the 'land beyond the forest.' That mighty brain and that iron resolution went with him to his grave, and are even now arrayed against us. (Stoker, 1897:365)</p>	<p>Castle Dracula The Year: 1462 A.D.</p> <p>CONSTANTINOPLE HAD FALLEN. MUSLIM TURKS SWEEPED INTO EUROPE WITH A VAST, SUPERIOR FORCE, STRIKING AT ROMANIA, THREATENING ALL OF CHRISTENDOM. FROM TRANSYLVANIA AROSE A ROMANIAN KNIGHT OF THE SACRED ORDER OF THE DRAGON, KNOWN AS DRACULEA. ON THE EVE OF THE BATTLE, HIS BRIDE ELISABETA WHOM HE PRIZED ABOVE ALL THINGS ON EARTH KNEW THAT HE MUST FACE AN INSURMOUNTABLE FORCE FROM WHICH HE MIGHT NEVER RETURN. (00:45-01:31)</p>	Substractions
5	<p>I looked, the eyes saw the sinking sun, and the look of hate in them turned to triumph. But, on the instant, came the sweep and flash of Jonathan's great knife. I shrieked as I saw it shear through the throat; whilst at the same moment Mr. Morris's bowie knife plunged into the heart. It was like a miracle; but before our very eyes, and almost in the drawing of a breath, the whole body crumble into dust and passed from our sight.</p>	<p>MEANWHILE In the castle chapel Dracula lies on the floor, dying Mina kneels next to him DRACULA: Where is my God? He has forsaken me. It is finished. MINA: Oh, my love! (She kisses him) My love! MINA HARKER'S DIARY: There, in the presence of God, I understood at last how my love could release us all from the powers of darkness. Our love is stronger than death. DRACULA: Give me peace. Mina pushes the sword through Dracula's heart The burn on her forehead disappears Dracula dies Mina kisses him goodbye, then cuts off his head THE END (1:58:20-2:00:37)</p>	Substractions

but as complex cultural negotiations that reflect and respond to the historical and social contexts of their creation.

METHODS

This research examines the adaptation process from novel to film, analysing the transformations and omissions that occur when converting written text to audiovisual media. The adaptation study examines how differences in media formats affect storytelling between novel and film, and analyses the film adaptation. To achieve these research objectives, the study employs a comparative methodology to analyse the differences

between the source novel and its film adaptation. The analysis utilizes adaptation theory as its theoretical framework. The initial phase of the research involves identifying and classifying elements that remain consistent across both the written and visual formats, establishing a foundation for understanding the adaptation process.

The fascinating realm of adaptation studies is the area where one understands how stories transform from one medium to another. But how researchers approach this complex field is to pull back the curtain and explore the methods used to unravel the mysteries of adaptation. Scholars in adaptation studies have used close textual analysis. Careful reading from both source material, of novel and its adaptation film, against one another, considering plot, characterization, themes, and style. It's rather like being a literary detective, trying to find clues as to how and why certain changes were made in the adaptation process. Smith et al. (2018) employed data mining methods to identify some of the common narrative structures in novel-to-film adaptations, which showed fascinating patterns of story reshaping for the screen. This holistic approach helps us understand adaptation as an ongoing, multi-faceted process rather than a one-time event. Zhang (2023) has experimented with elements of a novel are most likely to be retained or changed in a film adaptation. e picture of the complex, dynamic process of adaptation.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Given that an adaptation work has been filtered by a human with a different background, mindset, and ability from the original owner of the work, it appears that the term “adapted work” will not be distinguished from the name of change. After all, the change in the medium from one form to another undoubtedly requires adjustments for whatever reason. (Hutcheon, 2012:37) Adapter is also powerful enough to reduce the plot to provide the ending expected by the audience in the story. Change can also be in the form of adding characters and situations, or it can change the storyline into a pattern generally understood as the beginning, middle, and end. One of the books Francis Ford Coppola adapted was Bram Stoker’s *Dracula* in 1992, and some of the adjustments Hutcheon highlighted are evident in his work. This table contains data of adaptation found in Bram Stoker’s *Dracula* novel and film; it consists of five data divided into two additions data and three modifications data (Table 1).

The moment when Mina encountered Dracula, and the two of them proceeded to walk together through the streets of London is depicted in this scene from Figure 1 (47:05–47:50) of the film. Dracula introduced himself as Prince Vlad of Sagite. This scene



Figure 1. Mina Encountered Dracula



Figure 2. Dracula was Desperate

was only available in the film and not in the novel, according to Hutcheon (2012:37). A picaresque story could be added to the adaptation to give the audience a more identifiable rhythm, or an addition could be made in terms of ethics or structure. We can presume that Dracula and Mina's love story is one of the additions made by the film's director.

The moment Dracula, who was already in a desperate situation, took Lucy as his bride that very night by sucking her blood and giving her eternal life after reading Mina's letter about her departure and marriage to Jonathan in the restaurant is depicted in this scene in the films from Figure 2 (1:14:45-1:15:08). This sequence reinforces the addition of the picaresque love story between Dracula and Mina since it demonstrates how desperate Dracula is for Mina after she abandoned him for Jonathan in the film.

This is one of Coppola's adaptations of the story (1:38:09-1:39:46), in which Mina's character is described as a young girl who works as a schoolmistress and befriends Lucy (Figure 3). The main distinction is that Mina here becomes a woman who cheated on her fiancé Jonathan with Dracula or did so while posing as Vlad of Sagite. After the episode with Jonathan, Mina is shown in her book as despising Dracula. However, after being made to drink his blood, she changed her mind and even offered to become a vampire since she adored him so much. One of the reasons Mina's character was changed in this way may be due to Coppola's personal preference, as there is no mention of Mina loving Dracula or Dracula as a figure full of love and masquerading as Vlad in the book. This story fragment has a significant impact on the entire plot, and it is the fundamental difference between Mina's role here.

This Dracula origin narrative, which can be found in Figure 4 (00:45-01:31), is one of Coppola's story modifications. Dracula, who in the book had no known past other than the fact that he was a Romanian knight, was changed in the movie to become Vlad of Sagite, a Romanian knight who fought a valiant battle to defend Christianity and had a fiancée named Elizabeth who committed suicide by jumping into a river after learning a rumor that Dracula had been killed; later in the plot, Elizabeth is revealed to have resemblance with Mina. The primary distinction is because, despite the fact that the novel didn't directly mention it, it may be assumed that filmmaker Francis Ford Coppola modified Dracula's origin by identifying the ruler of Romania, Vlad The Impaler, as the same person by using intertextuality. It's claimed that this change represents Coppola's interpretation of Vlad and Dracula and their decision to blend them into a single persona and create a love narrative for him.



Figure 3. Mina Met Dracula

This Bram Stoker's *Dracula* finale, which can be found in Figure 5 (1:58:20-2:00:37), is one of Coppola's plot modifications. Bram Stoker's *Dracula* was initially supposed to end with the chapter in which Jonathan, Van Helsing, Jack, Arthur, and Quincey raced to catch Dracula in his carriage with the gipsies and finally caught him to cut off his head and stab him in the heart in the earth boxes before sunset. This scene was changed into one in which Mina defends him before Jonathan and Quincey can kill him. In the end, she was the one who remained by Dracula until the very end and granted him peace as desired by stabbing him in the heart and chopping off his head, lifting the curse from both him and Mina. The changes that director Coppola made to *Dracula*'s love story with Mina did, in fact, have an impact on how the story ends.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on research on the adaptation of the novel to the film *Bram Stoker's Dracula* by Francis Ford Coppola, it can be concluded that there were several significant changes from



Figure 4. Dracula Met His Fiancée



Figure 5. Dracula was Caught

the original work. These changes include fairly basic additions and modifications to the story. This film adaptation added two important scenes that were not in the novel, namely the initial meeting between Dracula (who disguised himself as Prince Vlad) and Mina in London, and the scene in the restaurant depicting Dracula's despair after reading Mina's letter. In addition, there were three major modifications in the film, including changes to Mina's character who is depicted as falling in love with Dracula, the addition of Dracula's origin story as Vlad who lost his lover Elisabeta, and changes to the ending where Mina kills Dracula as a form of liberation from the curse. Overall, Coppola's adaptation tends to add elements of romance that are not in the original novel, changing the gothic horror theme to be more nuanced with a tragic love story.

The journey from Stoker's gothic horror novel to Coppola's romantic reimagining reveals something profound about how stories evolve to speak to different generations. While Stoker's original work captured Victorian anxieties about sexuality, immigration, and modernity through the lens of horror, Coppola transformed the narrative into a tale of eternal love and redemption - yet both versions resonate deeply with their respective audiences. The analysis of the specific changes made in the film adaptation - from the addition of Dracula's tragic origin story to the fundamental reimagining of Mina's character and the film's poignant ending - demonstrates how adaptation can breathe new life into classical works while preserving their core essence. Rather than viewing these changes as departures from the source material, we can understand them as reinterpretations that allow the story to speak to contemporary audiences in meaningful ways. What's particularly fascinating is how Coppola's adaptation didn't simply transpose the story from page to screen, but rather engaged in a deeper dialogue with the source material. By weaving in historical elements about Vlad the Impaler and crafting a love story that spans centuries, the film creates layers of meaning that both honor and expand upon Stoker's original vision. This case study ultimately reminds us that great stories are living entities, capable of evolution and transformation while maintaining their power to captivate audiences. In the end, both Stoker's novel and Coppola's film stand as testaments to the enduring appeal of the Dracula myth, each offering unique perspectives on love, death,

and immortality that continue to resonate with audiences across time and media.

For the development of adaptation studies in the future, more in-depth research needs to be done to understand the motivations and impacts of changes in the adaptation process, especially from a cultural and sociological perspective. In addition, it would be very useful to conduct a broader comparative study comparing the various adaptations of *Dracula* that have been made to see the patterns of change that have occurred over time. The study of audience reception to the changes in these adaptations is also important to understand the impact of the story transformation on audience reception. Adaptation research methodology should continue to be developed by integrating digital humanities approaches and new technologies to provide a more comprehensive perspective. Finally, more systematic documentation of the decision-making process in adaptation is needed to understand the factors that influence changes from novel to film, so that it can provide deeper insight into the process of adapting literary works to visual media.

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