

65-A comparison of the adopted films *Bram Stoker's Dracula* and *Horror of Dracula* to the novel *Dracula*

Uğur DİLER¹

Burcu BAYRAKTAR²

APA: Diler, U.; Bayraktar, B. (2020). A comparison of the adopted films Bram Stoker's Dracula and Horror of Dracula to the novel Dracula. *RumeliDE Dil ve Edebiyat Araştırmaları Dergisi*, (Ö8), 825-830. DOI: 10.29000/rumelide.825953.

Abstract

One of the most appealing but also frightening mythical beings is vampires. The myth of vampires goes back to Babylon. First vampires are known as Babylon vampires, Ekimmus. Many ancient societies had vampire myths and in those myths, vampires were described as evil creatures which fed on the human soul or their blood. Moreover, the most well-known vampire is a fictional character, Count Dracula, in the book, *Dracula*, written by Bram Stoker in 1897. Bram Stoker was inspired by Vlad Dracula, the brutally cruel ruler of Walachia, Romania. The reason why Count Dracula is the best-known vampire is that the book, *Dracula*, is probably one of the most adapted works of literature. One of them is *Bram Stoker's Dracula* (1992) produced and directed by Francis Ford Coppola and the other one is *Horror of Dracula* (1958) directed by Terence Fisher. Thus, the aim of this article is to discuss the similarities and differences between the adapted works of Coppola and Fisher and the source text, Bram Stoker's epistolary novel, *Dracula*.

Keywords: Dracula, vampires, film adaptation, myth

Bram Stoker'in Drakulası ve Drakula'nın Dehşeti film uyarlamalarının Drakula romanı ile karşılaştırılması

Öz

En çekici ama aynı zamanda korkutucu efsanevi varlıklardan biri vampirlerdir. Vampir efsanesi Babil'e kadar uzanmaktadır. İlk vampirler, Babil vampiri olarak bilinen Ekimmus'tur. Pek çok eski çağ toplumlarında vampir efsaneleri vardı ve bu efsanelerde vampirler insan ruhu veya kanından beslenen kötü yaratıklar olarak tasvir ediliyordu. Bununla birlikte, en tanınmış vampir 1987'de Bram Stoker tarafından yazılmış olan *Drakula* adlı eserindeki kurgusal bir karakter olan Kont Drakula'dır. Bram Stoker, Romanya'daki Walachia'nın zalim hükümdarı Vlad Drakula'dan esinlenmiştir. Kont Drakula'nın en bilindik vampire olmasının nedeni, Drakula kitabının en çok uyarlanmış edebi eserlerden biri olmasıdır. Bunlardan biri Francis Ford Coppola'nın yapımcılığı ve yönetmenliğini yaptığı Bram Stoker'a ait *Drakula*, diğeri ise Terrence Fisher'in yönettiği *Drakula'nın Dehşeti*'dir. Bu makalede, kaynak metin olan Bram Sotoker'ın *Drakula* romanı ile Coppola ve Fisher'in film uyarlamalarının arasındaki benzerlikler ve farklılıklar tartışılmıştır.

Anahtar kelimeler: Drakula, vampir, film uyarlaması, efsane

¹ Dr. Öğr. Üyesi, Mardin Artuklu Üniversitesi, Yabancı Diller Yüksekokulu, Mütercim Tercümanlık Bölümü (Mardin, Türkiye), dilerugur@hotmail.com, ORCID ID: 0000-0002-2194-0451 [Makale kayıt tarihi: 13.09.2020-kabul tarihi: 20.11.2020; DOI: 10.29000/rumelide.825953]

² Öğr. Gör., İstanbul Bilgi Üniversitesi, İngilizce Hazırlık Okulu (İstanbul, Türkiye), mburcubayraktar@yahoo.com, ORCID ID: 0000 0002 8792 0138

Introduction

Throughout history, vampires have been given some features in different societies. In ancient times, they were believed to feed on human aura or blood at night. Also, some diseases such as lupus and porphyria were associated with vampirism, as those diseases cause extreme sensitivity to light and red-stained teeth. The patients were recommended not to eat garlic since it was assumed that garlic worsened the symptoms. In Christian societies, the Cross was used to keep vampires away because vampires were considered demons. The combination of all those features created the characteristics of vampires in Gothic fiction. Vampires are associated with bats and have been depicted as undead, evil creatures which can only be killed by a wooden stake through the chest, cannot walk in daylight, sleep in their coffins containing their native soils, have sharp teeth, fangs so that they can feed on human blood instead of food or drinks, have unusual eye colours, and have the ability of mind control. Some other characteristics of vampires are their strengths, invisibility of their shadows since they do not have souls, their fear of garlic, holy water, and the cross. They can also transform into animals, especially bats and wolves.

Based on the features of vampires, nearly all of these characteristics of a vampire are depicted the same as in *Dracula* and Bram Stoker's *Dracula* while the characterization of Dracula in Fisher's version is slightly different from the source text. In the novel, Jonathan notices that Dracula neither eats nor drinks anything during his stay at Dracula's castle. Moreover, Dracula disappears in daylight. He also finds out boxes containing Transylvanian soil, which is the native soil of Dracula. Another characteristic of Dracula is that Jonathan cannot see Dracula's reflection in the mirror while he is shaving. In London, Dracula controls Lucy's mind as well as Mina's to suck their blood. When Van Helsing notices the bites on Lucy's neck, he decorates the room with garlic flowers. He also asks Lucy to wear a Christian crucifix and a garlic necklace in order to keep Dracula away. While Van Helsing, Jonathan, John, and Quincey, who are the heroes in the novel, are chasing down the Count, who is the villain, he transforms into different animals such as bats, wolves, and rats. The heroes destroy Dracula's boxes containing native soil with the help of holy bread and the cross. They manage to kill Count Dracula by stabbing a wooden stake through his chest. In Coppola's adaptation, Dracula has the same characteristics which are depicted in the novel while in Fisher's adaptation there are some changes in the characteristics of Dracula. Coppola and Stoker's Dracula can walk in daylight, yet he is not as powerful as he is at night. Fisher's Dracula, on the other hand, cannot walk in daylight since sunlight is deadly to vampires. Another difference is that Coppola's Dracula and Dracula in the book returns to human appearance before he becomes a vampire when he is killed while Fisher's Dracula turns into ashes when he is exposed to sunlight. In both adapted films, however, the characteristics of Dracula are mostly portrayed the same as in the novel.

Gothic elements in *Dracula*

Even though the characteristics of vampires in *Bram Stoker's Dracula* are mostly portrayed the same as in the novel, the genre of Coppola's film is different from the novel. The novel, *Dracula*, which includes Gothic elements such as deserted places -Dracula's castle and his properties in London-, graveyards, foggy and gloomy atmosphere, mystery, and of course the vampire as the villain, is one of the best-known examples of Gothic fiction. Coppola's *Dracula* includes the same characteristics of Gothic fiction as they are introduced in the novel, yet the backstory of Dracula turns the genre of the film into Gothic romance. In the opening scene, Vlad Dracula is introduced as a brave warrior prince leaving his wife Elisabetha to fight against the enemies of Christianity. After he defeats the enemies on

the battlefield, he returns to Elisabetha but devastating news welcomes him. Turks whom Vlad Dracula had fought against sent a letter to Elisabetha stating that her husband was dead. Elisabetha commits suicide after reading the letter. The priest tells him that Elisabetha's soul is damned to hell for committing suicide. Due to the agony of losing his true love, Vlad Dracula challenges God by stabbing the stone cross and drinks the blood coming out of the cross. Thus, Vlad Dracula becomes vampire Dracula. Over 300 years later, Dracula buys some properties in London. Jonathan Harker, a lawyer, travels to Transylvania to finalize the property transaction. Dracula sees the picture of Harker's fiancée, Mina. Due to the resemblance between Mina and Elisabetha, Dracula believes that Mina is the reincarnation of Elizabeth. Therefore, Dracula's motive for moving to London changes from creating a vampire army to finding his true love, Elisabetha/Mina. Differently from Stoker's novel, it also changes the relationship between Mina and Dracula from the victim and victimizer to beauty and the beast. In one of the romantic moments between them, Dracula turns her tears into diamonds and he says "there is much to learn from the beasts" (Coppola 1992: 8). Also, Dracula hesitates to change into her a vampire, a beast since he does not want to blemish her beauty. In the ending scene, Mina/Elisabetha saves her eternal love from being a beast by stabbing a wooden stake through his heart and cutting his head. Briefly, the combination of the gothic elements and eternal love turns Stoker's gothic horror to Coppola's gothic romance.

Adaptation of Coppola's Dracula to the novel

Coppola's adaptation is based on Stoker's novel; however, there are some differences due to the preferred reading of the director. Directors may want to give the same story or the same message in a different way since "as a process of creation, the act of adaptation always involves both (re-)interpretation and then (re-)creation" (Hutcheon, 1996: 8). It depends on the director's perspective. In Stoker's *Dracula*, warnings and gifts of people during Jonathan's journey to Transylvania foreshadows the darkness and evil awaiting him. In Coppola's version, Reinfeld's madness after visiting Dracula's castle foreshadows it. That is to say, the same message is given in different ways. Another difference is character development due to the change of story in adapted films. In Stoker's *Dracula*, Dracula is the villain and the main male characters are the heroes against Dracula, which means it is a battle between good and evil. Another difference between the novel and the adapted film is the theme. In the book, Dracula's motive in going to London is not clearly given. Coppola gives him a reason to move to London. In *Bram Stoker's Dracula*, the backstory of Dracula, which explains how he becomes a vampire, turns him into a tragic hero rather than a villain. Dracula dares God and his creatures as revenge for his true love. The backstory also explains why he goes to London: to find Elisabetha/Mina. In addition to the theme of revenge, not only good is versus evil but also superstitions are versus science in the source text. However, Coppola does not mention it in the film. "The source text forms a series of verbal cues which the adapting text film can selectively take up, ignore, subvert, or transform" (Stam, 2005: 46). Not to spoil the Gothic romance he builds throughout the film, Coppola ignores superstitions as well as the homoerotic relationship between Harker and Dracula when he is imprisoned in Dracula's castle.

Adaptation of Fisher's Dracula to the novel

Fisher's adaptation based on *Dracula* also has some differences in terms of the way the message is given, character development, and theme. In *Dracula*, darkness is foreshadowed through the dialogs between Harker and the locals, and the depiction of the places on the way to Dracula's castle while in Fisher's version arrival of Jonathan at the empty castle of Dracula in daylight and his suspicious

behaviour foreshadow it. In addition, in *Horror of Dracula*, the good-evil battle war remains the same but Fisher changes the roles of the characters. In his version, Jonathan and Lucy are minor characters and so they die first while Van Helsing and Arthur have leading roles. That's why Jonathan is married to Lucy instead of Mina since Mina is an important character in the film and the book and Mina is married to Arthur. In the ending scene, Van Helsing kills Dracula to save Mina and humanity. Another difference between the source text and Fisher's adaption is the theme. Like Coppola, Fisher also gives Dracula a reason to move to London. In *Horror of Dracula*, Jonathan knows who Dracula is and thus pretends to be a librarian to kill him. He first kills Dracula's bride and so Dracula goes to London to kill Jonathan's bride as revenge.

Science and technology in *Dracula* and the adopted films

There are many references to science and technology in the book and thus in the films. The Age of Enlightenment and then the Industrial Revolution changed the way people thought, reshaped societies, and changed the literary movement from Romanticism to Realism. People became skeptic and the empirical method was used for theoretical exploration. There are some specific references to them in the book. In fact, the word, doubt, is used sixty-eight times in the book. Even though Jonathan witnesses some strange events during his stay at Count's castle, he tries to find logical explanations for them or the second captain of Demeter gets furious when the crew claims that there is something evil in the ship. Another reference is Van Helsing's words: "In this enlightened age, when men believe not even what they see, the doubting of wise men would be his greatest strength" (Stoker, 1992: 386). Therefore, Van Helsing, a scientist, examines Lucy and collects data before he shares his doubts about Dracula.

In addition to skepticism and empirical method, there are also specific references to the science and technology used in the nineteenth century. One example is how the journals are kept. Mina uses a typewriter to keep her journal; Jonathan records his journal in shorthand; John keeps her journal on a phonograph. Another example is that Jonathan uses a Kodak camera to take pictures of Dracula's property in England. Besides, telegrams are used to communicate and trains, as a way of transport, are frequently mentioned in the book. Modern treatments such as blood transfusion and hypnosis are also introduced through the methods that Van Helsing uses. In Fisher and Coppola's adaptations, scepticism is not involved; however, science and technology take place in their films. Actually, Coppola goes further and adds a scene to the film in which Dracula approaches to Mina and asks her direction to the cinematograph that he describes it as a 'wonder of civilized world' (Coppola, 1992: 8). Also, red blood cells under a microscope are shown in the film. Shortly, Coppola's version is more successful than Fisher's in terms of giving the message that Stoker intended in his novel by including science and technology.

The narrative style in *Dracula*

In both literary work and cinema films, the narration is the core of the product. In a literary work, the story is told through words. The feelings and thoughts of the characters are conveyed to the reader through the words as well. Also, detailed descriptions of characters, settings, events, and objects are highly required so that readers can create the world described in their minds. In consideration of the similarities between novels and films in terms of narration, film directors can use mostly the same narration technique in their films. In Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, Coppola is mostly loyal to the narration in *Dracula*; however, Fisher's adaptation does not employ all of them. The novel is narrated through

multiple voices. A multiplicity of voices and points of view in Gothic fiction introduced by Wilkie Collins allows all the characters to tell the story from their points of view. "Within this narration system, the author professes to be no more than a collector of documents, a compiler of the facts of the case" (Halberstam, 2020: 164). In *Dracula*, Bram Stoker adopts Collin's polyphonic narrative style. The novel employing multiple first-person narrators is narrated by the main characters, Mina, Jonathan, Lucy, Dr. Seward, and Van Helsing through journal entries, phonograph, letters, telegrams, and newspaper articles. On the other hand, the other main character, Count Dracula, does not have a voice in the novel. In *Bram Stoker's Dracula*, Coppola is loyal to the polyphonic narrative style in the source text; however, Coppola gives voice to the main character, Dracula and it lets him tell the story from his point of view. In Fisher's version, the film is mainly narrated by Van Helsing besides Jonathan's diary at the beginning of the film. That is to say, Fisher does not employ the multiplicity of voices, but Dracula is silenced as in the novel.

As well as narrative style, images contribute to the narration. In a film, images themselves can tell part of the story, independently of language because the visuals are doing the narrating. (Dick, 1990: 3) Images in Coppola's version are effectively used. The use of colours is significantly important. In her article analysing colour and symbolic imagery in Coppola's *Dracula*, Veronika Bernard (1992) states that linking coded colours to symbolic imagery helps to create cinematic cohesion and coherence.

According to Bernard, Red is associated with the uncontrolled while Blue is related to the controlled. In the scenes of *Dracula*, red colour is mostly used since Dracula is associated with passion, desires, and sin as well as blood. The appearance of female characters, Lucy and Mina, also contribute to the symbolic meaning of red colour. Lucy, who does not fit into the characteristics of Victorian women, is red-haired. It shows that she is the uncontrolled in Victorian society. Another reference is her red bed gown that she was wearing while having an intimate relationship with Dracula. Unlike Lucy, Mina, who is a typical Victorian woman, wears blue dresses, which is associated with the controlled, until she develops a desire for Dracula. In the closing scene, Mina protecting Dracula against her husband also wears a red dress. Even though the red colour is used in Fisher's *Dracula*, the symbolic meaning of it is reduced to passion and sin.

In addition to the images, soundtracks, background, and atmospheric sounds, the Foley sounds contribute to narration as they reinforce plot and character development. They also foreshadow the upcoming scene. In Coppola's adaptation, romantic scenes such as the scene when Dracula holds Elizabetha's dead body or Mina and Dracula's dinner-scene, are accompanied by lyrical music while it becomes dynamic at the dramatic scenes like the transformation of Vlad into Dracula. In Fisher's adaptation, the symphonic music itself in the opening scene along with the grotesque figures not only introduces the genre of the film but also foreshadows what waiting Jonathan is dark, evil.

Conclusion

In conclusion, Bram Stoker's *Dracula* and *Horror of Dracula* are based on the epistolary novel, *Dracula*; however, Coppola and Fisher approach to the source text from their own perspectives. Even though they mostly remain loyal to the source text, their preferred readings change the genre, the narration, the character development, and some themes introduced in the novel since the director is author of the cinema and so their interpretation of the source text is reflected in the cinema. Therefore, the adaptations differ from the source text, *Dracula* in some points, yet the main points and the message of the novel are given in the adaptations by using the audio-visual advantages of cinema films.

References

- Bernard, Veronika. (2011). A Semiotic analysis of colours and symbolic imagery in Francis Ford Coppola's Bram Stoker's Dracula (1992). *Cinej Cinema Journal*, Special Issue: 1. (https://www.researchgate.net/publication/274154490_The_Language_of_Colours_A_Semiotic_Analysis_of_Colours_and_Symbolic_Imagery_in_Francis_Ford_Coppola's_Bram_Stoker's_Dracula_1992). Accessed 04 April 2020.
- Bram Stoker's Dracula*. Directed by Francis Ford Coppola, performances by |Gary Oldman, Winona Ryder, Anthony Hopkins, and Keanu Reeves, Columbia Pictures, 1992.
- Dick, Bernard F. (1990). *The anatomy of film*. New York: St. Martin's Press.
- Halberstam, Jake. (2020) Parasites and perverts: An introduction to the gothic monstrosity. Jeffrey Andrew Weinstock (Ed.), *The Monster Theory Reader* (180-188) University of Minnesota Press.
- Hutcheon, Linda. (2006). *A Theory of adaptation*. New York: Routledge.
- Stam, Robert. (2005). *Literature and film: A guide to the theory and practice of film adaptation*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Stoker, Bram. (2017) *Dracula*. Istanbul: MK Publications.