

The Physical and Psychological Adaptations of Count Dracula in Francis Ford Coppola's *Bram Stoker's Dracula* (1992) and Cole Haddon's TV show *Dracula* (2013)

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Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897) is, today, considered a classic. Dracula is one of the most adapted and appropriated characters in the contemporary pop culture of movies, tv shows and animations. He has been depicted in different environments and time settings, such as in Genndy Tartakovsky's animation *Hotel Transylvania* (2012), where he is portrayed as the father of a teenage girl and the owner of a hotel for monsters in the 21st century. Or in Gary Shore's *Dracula Untold* (2014), where he is a just, fair 15th century prince who gives away his humanity to save his people. But what calls attention to these adaptations is how differently Dracula's physical and psychological features are depicted. These features vary according to the director, his personal vision and interpretation of the character, and the target audience. According to Gadamer's view, which is pointed out in Jørgen Bruhn's article "Dialogizing Adaptation Studies", "we cannot establish an objective version of literary history, we are instead forced to establish a reception history of a given work in relation to our own understanding of it, as well as the contexts surrounding the work."¹ *Hotel Transylvania's* Dracula, for example, is cute instead of scary. *Dracula Untold's* is a tall, imposing man in armor. So we can notice it in these two adaptations of Bram Stoker's novel: Francis Ford Coppola's *Bram Stoker's Dracula* (1992) and Cole Haddon's *Dracula* (2013). With both being modern adaptations for cinema and television, there are very

¹ BRUHN. Dialogizing Adaptation Studies: From One-Way Transport to a Dialogic Two-Way Process, p. 1.

similar characteristics concerning the depiction of the main character, Count Dracula, especially taking into account that both were made by people and for audiences who were very different from the 19th century novelist Bram Stoker and his Victorian public.

Following Jørgen Bruhn's proposal, this essay shall establish a dialogical analysis, a comparison between what is similar and what is different on the works involved, as they are "infinitely changing positions, taking turns being sources for each other in the on-going work of the reception in the adaptational process".² Thus, it will analyze the original psychological and physical descriptions of Count Dracula in Bram Stoker's novel, as well as his supernatural abilities. Then, it shall examine these same features on Coppola's movie *Bram Stoker's Dracula* (1992) and on Haddon's first and only season of *Dracula* (2013) in order to understand how the Count has been depicted through different visions and contexts, and how they may or may not have been used as sources to one another. Finally, it shall analyze how Coppola's and Haddon's adaptations of the character fit into the theory conveyed in Jørgen Bruhn's article "Dialogizing Adaptation Studies", which defends the conjecture that it is impossible for an adaptation to be strictly loyal to the original.

Count Dracula's Two-Way Process

In the original novel, Dracula had his own qualities that served as inspiration for the numerous adaptations that followed the book. The Count is described by Jonathan Harker in the second chapter as a "tall old man, clean shaven save for a long moustache, and clad in black from head to foot, without a single speck of colour about him anywhere".³ Jonathan also notices some minor aspects on his first contact with Dracula, such as his excellent English, except for a strange intonation, a strength that made the man wince when the Count shook hands with him, and a skin that seemed "cold as ice, more like the hand of a dead than a living man".⁴ Harker also says that Dracula has a strong face:

² BRUHN. *Dialogizing Adaptation Studies: From One-Way Transport to a Dialogic Two-Way Process*, p. 5.

³ STOKER. *Dracula*, p. 286.

⁴ STOKER. *Dracula*, p. 286.

Very strong, aquiline, with high bridge of the thin nose and peculiarly arched nostrils, with lofty domed forehead, and hair growing scantily round the temples but profusely elsewhere. His eyebrows were very massive, almost meeting over the nose, and with bushy hair that seemed to curl in its own profusion. The mouth, so far as I could see under the heavy moustache, was fixed and rather cruel-looking, with peculiarly sharp white teeth. These protruded over the lips, whose remarkable ruddiness showed astonishing vitality in a man of his years. For the rest, his ears were pale, and at the tops extremely pointed. The chin was broad and strong, and the cheeks firm though thin. The general effect was one of extreme pallor.⁵

Next, Jonathan describes Dracula's hands, saying that they seemed white and fine, but were "rather coarse, broad with squat fingers. Strange to say, there were hairs in the centre of the palm. The nails were long and fine, and cut to a sharp point".⁶ As the novel advances, Jonathan observes that the Count physiognomy becomes younger:

And then I saw something which filled my very soul with horror. There lay the Count, but looking as if his youth had been half restored. For the white hair and moustache were changed to dark iron-grey. The cheeks were fuller, and the white skin seemed ruby-red underneath. The mouth was redder than ever, for on the lips were gouts of fresh blood, which trickled from the corners of the mouth and ran down over the chin and neck. Even the deep, burning eyes seemed set amongst swollen flesh, for the lids and pouches underneath were bloated.⁷

When it comes to Dracula's powers and psychological features, Jonathan notices many aspects also with surprise, fear, and disgust. He says that the Count has no reflection on glasses or mirrors, nor does he throw a shadow; he has strange reactions when in contact to other people's blood and to sacred symbols (such as the crucifix) and also that he does not eat nor drink. Later, Jonathan realizes Dracula's influence over wolves, his blue eyes turning red when he is raged and also his pride for his warrior heritage and interests on conquerors and great empires.

The Count shows himself to be very courteous and polite at first, but he often flies into impulses of rage when his plans are frustrated.

⁵ STOKER. *Dracula*, p. 287.

⁶ STOKER. *Dracula*, p. 287.

⁷ STOKER. *Dracula*, p. 300.

Harker tells from the beginning that he felt odd and uneasy in the Count's presence, saying that, when he first arrived in the castle, all of that seemed "like a horrible nightmare".⁸ Eventually, as Dracula's plans fail, he shows his true nature, which is cruel and violent, that of a predator, though he says he too is able to love.⁹

Again, another experience tells Jonathan about Dracula's inhuman strength and rage. As Jonathan goes out of his room to explore the castle to try to find a way out, he finds himself in a room where he meets Dracula's brides. There, as the three vampire women are seducing Jonathan, Dracula enters the room.

As my eyes opened involuntarily I saw his strong hand grasp the slender neck of the fair woman and with giant's power draw it back, the blue eyes transformed with fury, the white teeth champing with rage, and the fair cheeks blazing red with passion. But the Count! Never did I imagine such wrath and fury, even to the demons of the pit. His eyes were positively blazing. The red light in them was lurid, as if the flames of hell fire blazed behind them. [...] With a fierce sweep of his arm, he hurled the woman from him, and then motioned to the others, as though he were beating them back. It was the same imperious gesture that I had seen used to the wolves. In a voice which, though low and almost in a whisper seemed to cut through the air and then ring in the room he said, "How dare you touch him, any of you? How dare you cast eyes on him when I had forbidden it? Back, I tell you all! This man belongs to me! Beware how you meddle with him, or you'll have to deal with me".¹⁰

Dracula can also enter places, even if every door and window is locked, but only if he is invited in the first time. He is able to turn himself into a bat or a wolf. Although he can be active in daylight, he goes through a deathlike sleep during the day, which Jonathan describes as not being able to know if the Count was either dead or asleep, for his "eyes were open and stony, but without the glassiness of death, and the cheeks had the warmth of life through all their pallor".¹¹ Dracula only feeds on human blood, and if he is deprived of this diet, he weakens. He cannot rest in sacred soil, but he can rest and move through unsacred earth. He

⁸ STOKER. *Dracula*, p. 286.

⁹ STOKER. *Dracula*, p. 294.

¹⁰ STOKER. *Dracula*, p. 295.

¹¹ STOKER. *Dracula*, p. 299.

cannot be killed by random ways nor by the passing of time, but only by having his head cut off, his heart pierced by a stake or by the shot of a sacred bullet.

On the eighteenth chapter, Dr. Van Helsing unites all the information he and his mates have on the Count, but he also provides some new details about the Count's history and about the limitations of his powers.

This vampire which is amongst us is of himself so strong in person as twenty men, he is of cunning more than mortal, for his cunning be the growth of ages, he have still the aids of necromancy, which is, as his etymology imply, the divination by the dead, and all the dead that he can come nigh to are for him at command; he is brute, and more than brute; he is devil in callous, and the heart of him is not; he can within his range, direct the elements, the storm, the fog, the thunder; he can command all the manner things, the rat and the owl, and the bat, the moth, and the fox, and the wolf, he can grow and become small; and he can at times vanish and come unknown. [...] We have on our side power of combination, a power denied to the vampire kind, we have source of science, we are free to act and think, and the hours of the day and the night are ours equally.¹²

Van Helsing also highlights the Count's abilities to create mist around him, to a limited extent, and to be able to see in the dark. He also tells that Dracula's powers cease at daylight and that he can only shape shift at night or exactly at sunrise or sunset. He also is repelled by garlic and a branch of wild rose upon his coffin prevents him from leaving it. He can only travel through running water during the low or high tide.

Concerning Dracula's story, some other things are said besides those clues about his Szekelys ancestry on the first chapters of the book. Van Helsing tells that:

He must, indeed, have been that Voivode Dracula who won his name against the Turk, over the great river on the very frontier of Turkeyland. 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. The Draculas were, says Arminius, a great and noble race, though now and again were scions who were held by their coevals to have had

¹² STOKER. *Dracula*, p. 375.

dealings with the Evil One. They learned his secrets in the Scholomance, amongst the mountains over Lake Hermanstadt, where the devil claims the tenth scholar as his due. In the records are such words as 'stregoica' witch, 'ordog' and 'pokol' Satan and hell, and in one manuscript this very Dracula is spoken of as 'wampyr', which we all understand too well.¹³

By the end of the novel, Dracula is caught on an ambush and killed by Jonathan and Mr. Morris. As it was Van Helsing's plan, they cut off the Count's head and pierce his heart. Dracula is annihilated and his body turns into dust.

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 eyes, and almost in the drawing of a breath, the whole body crumbled into dust and passed from our sight.¹⁴

Concerning Francis Ford Coppola's movie *Bram Stoker's Dracula*, from 1992, the establishment of Count Dracula's physical and psychological features is set on the first minutes of the movie and in a very divergent way from Stoker's. Coppola chose to begin his adaptation by telling the story behind the transformation of the Count into the corrupt and vile vampire.

It was the year of 1462 and Muslin Turkey was threatening Christian Europe with superior military strength. In Transylvania, Romania, a Christian knight arose to fight the Turks, a tall, imposing, dark-haired man in red armor: Dracula. And so the first five minutes of Coppola's film continue, a short flashback to Dracula's history to set his upcoming saga in London. As also a first sign of adaptation liberty, Coppola assigns Dracula's vampirism to the tragic death of his beloved bride Elisabeta. After she received a false letter from the enemy saying that Dracula had died in battle, Elisabeta committed suicide, throwing herself into a river. When Dracula returned home, the castle's priest told him that Elisabeta's soul was damned, as said the laws of God, for she had taken her own life.

¹³ STOKER. *Drácula*, p. 376.

¹⁴ STOKER. *Drácula*, p. 431.

Dracula then renounced God and cursed that he would return from his own death with dark powers to avenge Elisabeta. "Blood is life", he said, "and it shall be mine".¹⁵

Thus, the reasons for his aversion to Christian beliefs and symbols, for his plans to turn humanity into living dead creatures, and most of all, the reasons for his main cruel and angry psychological features, as also part of his history or how he turned, were explained, differently from the novel, in which Stoker only suggests that the Count had turned into a vampire by having had dealings with the Devil, as some of his ancestors.¹⁶

Dracula appears next in 1897 Romania, in his old decaying castle and he himself as an old decaying man. He appears now pale, his skin wrinkled, his hair whitened and no mustache nor beard; he seems fragile and weak, an image of deterioration. But he soon shows himself to not be as fragile as he seems to. When the Count felt insulted by Jonathan Harker's laughter, he quickly drew a sword against the man, showing pride for his bloodline and the achievements of his ancestors. Yet, he shortly calms down, showing to be a great manipulator, while he knows he needs to gain Jonathan's trust.

Coppola also made sure to subtly depict some other features of the Count on his adaptation. As in the 1897 novel, Coppola's Dracula is also able to crawl on walls, to impose his will on people, to exercise influence over wolves and over the weather, to have inhuman strength, as well as to love. The latter, which was simply mentioned in the book, was made important part of the movie, for the Count's quest to London seems to be reinforced by his desire to meet Mina Murray, which very much resembles his deceased bride Elisabeta. He is also depicted as very emotional when in contact to anything related to Mina. The Count is also able to turn himself into a wolf and into a bat, but differently from the original novel, Coppola portrays Dracula as a giant human like bat.

Dracula also exhibits a youthful appearance as the story goes on, though he is always wearing modern clothes and is not always all in black. Yet, some features were added to the Count's list of abilities, such as the

¹⁵ BRAM Stoker's *Dracula*, 0:05:00–0:05:06.

¹⁶ STOKER. *Drácula*, p. 376.

capacity to see things from miles of distance, to turn himself into green glowing mist, to enter places without being invited in or to move his own shadow apart from the movements of his body – though he still shows no reflection on mirrors or glasses. Besides, his eyes are not always red, his ears only show to be pointed when he is in bat form and his teeth are only sharpened when he is feeding.

Again, Dracula's feelings for Mina, or, actually, for Elisabeta, are of the most importance to the movie's plot and to his physical and psychological changes throughout the film. While the Count is in Mina's presence, he looks young and vivid, his cruelty and anger are under control. But, when Mina leaves to Romania to marry Jonathan, Dracula cries and his physical aspects change once again to an old, wrinkled and pale decaying man. He bursts in anger and hate, calling for strong winds to sweep the city. Then, he turns himself into a wolf and, finally, kills Lucy Westenra.

While Van Helsing and the other men are on their way to hunt Dracula and destroy his lair, the Count goes after Mina with the intention to turn her into a vampire. But when he finds her, a moment of love and tenderness strikes Dracula, making him reconsider condemning his beloved to eternal thirst for blood, to be forever undead.

By the end, Dracula is weakened by Van Helsing's tricks and returns to Transylvania to regain strength. There, on his way to his castle, he is caught on an ambush by Van Helsing and friends. Wounded and now resembling his bat form, Dracula is allowed to go inside the castle with Mina, where, on the same altar where centuries ago he renounced God, he made peace with Him once more. There the Count asks Mina to end his sufferings and so she sticks the sword on his heart and then cut off his head. Dracula is dead and Mina is safe.

Regarding Haddon's *Dracula*, we might notice that it has a peculiar beginning. Nonetheless, some similarities to the original nature of the Count still remain. On the first minutes of the show, we are presented with a large tomb being assaulted by two mysterious men. The coffin, adorned with many paintings of impaled people, carries inside a corpse with its mouth opened, showing strangely sharp teeth. Suddenly, one of the men slits the other one's throat pronouncing the known words "the

blood is the life”,¹⁷ while he pulls the struggling man upon the coffin, so his blood can fall right inside the corpse’s mouth. As many stakes are withdrawn by gears from the body, the blood starts to once again moisturize the corpse as it recovers life.

1896, London. Dracula’s first appearance shows a modern elegant young man preparing himself for an exhibition: Dracula is passing himself off as Alexander Grayson, an American industrialist.

Right from the beginning we can notice some well-known characteristics of the Count from Stoker’s novel and some that differ completely. For instance, the Count, or Alexander, is extremely courteous at first, though he shows some kind of mystery and shyness. But as soon as he gets frustrated or disappointed, his rage is that of a killer. Differently from Stoker and Coppola, Haddon’s Grayson shows extreme sensibility to daylight and the mere contact to it burns his skin. He has not only superhuman strength, but extraordinary fighting skills, as he has to deal with vampire hunters; he shows to be lustful and to fancy alcoholic drinks. He, apparently, is not repelled by the cross, except by the blade of the Saint Eligius - which is a cross with a built-in blade - and other blades alike, that if crossed through his foot, prevents him from moving. But what may be one of the most peculiar characteristics is that Dracula has human allies, these being Renfield, an employee, and Abraham Van Helsing, who we later find out to be the man who brought Dracula back from the tomb.

As did Coppola, Haddon also sets a background history for Dracula, which directly interferes on his present journey. Dracula is identified by Van Helsing as “Vlad III, prince of Wallachia, second son of the House of Basarab, also known as Vlad Tepes, ‘Vlad, the Impaler’, Dracula”.¹⁸ Centuries back, his wife, Ilona, was burned alive by the Order of the Dragon as a manner of punishing him for heresy. The Order is an ancient brotherhood that for centuries has been hunting heretics by the sword and the cross. By their hands Dracula became a vampire.

¹⁷ DRACULA, 00:02:04–00:02:07.

¹⁸ DRACULA, ep. 2.

In the 19th century and acting through politics and oil business, the Order also murders Van Helsing's family for he had disobeyed the Order's laws. Thus, Van Helsing formulates a plan to bring Dracula back and use him as the strength of their vengeance. Besides destroying the Order, Dracula also wishes to create a legion of vampires. As their plan goes on, Dracula meets Mina Murray, who looks very much alike his deceased wife, Ilona. So, again, despite his cruelty and lack of moral, Dracula is able to love.

Part of Grayson's and Van Helsing's plan includes developing a serum that allows Dracula to walk in sunlight and not be hurt. As he starts to experience a few hours of sunlight, he develops a strong desire to live like a man and to not feed on human blood. He later assumes that these wishes, that are, of course, impossible, come from his love for Mina.

As for other details observed, Dracula's sharp teeth and reddish eyes only appear when he is feeding or raged; his senses are extremely sensitive, so he can track people by their smell as well as notice if someone is lying by observing the pupil dilatation and by hearing their heartbeats. He shows no sign of pointed ears or abnormal pallor and although he is not depicted in any animal form, it is mentioned that one of the men he killed was killed by a wolf. Any possible wound he has, including sun burns, will be regenerated when he feeds on blood. He exercises strong influence over minor vampires, being able to summon them, as they recognize him as master. Dracula also shows empathy for his own species, as he cries when he sees one of them being held captive, as well as he also shows empathy for his friends, as he worries and save Renfield from a torturer.

Haddon's TV show was cancelled and therefore there is no end to it.

Surely, we are now able to say that Coppola and Haddon took a wide variety of liberties to adapt their versions of Count Dracula, for neither of them is strictly loyal to Stoker's novel, since both created an important history background for the character and also changed much on his physical appearance and psychological aspects, compared to the original character.

Bram Stoker's Dracula and *Dracula* have a gap of 21 years between their launches and, though they have somehow the same audience, the

contexts of production and the directors were very different by the time of the making of the adaptations. Francis Ford Coppola was already a well-known and reputed director with more than 20 years of work on the film industry when he produced his adaptation of *Dracula*. Haddon, on the other hand, is a former journalist and yet not largely known. But, both their works show similar characteristics and visions of Count Dracula. One may yet dare to say that Cole Haddon may have had Coppola as source of inspiration for his own adaptation of the Count. For instance, Haddon, as did Coppola, tells the story that Mina Murray is the reincarnation of Dracula's deceased wife. On both adaptations, Dracula goes after Mina encouraged by his love and grief, differently from the novel, in which Dracula goes after Mina for revenge against Jonathan Harker and his friends who were trying to destroy him. Thus, both directors, especially Haddon, who included other aspects, such as empathy and so on, created a more human and sentimental version of Dracula, who in his original description is cold and cruel and barely carries resemblance to human emotions. We could assume that these new aspects added to the Count's personality, as for his new physical changes – he looks handsome and seductive, modern and well-dressed on both adaptations, differently from the novel, in which he looks quite monstrous and disgusting – may have been added as a sign of our modern times and the need to empathize viewers in relation to the Count's cruel desires, to give reason to them. Stoker's Dracula is despicable and impossible to be liked, but Coppola's and Haddon's versions of Dracula were well accepted by the public and became rather popular amongst viewers.

As for his supernatural abilities, both directors showed much of what Stoker described in his novel. Thus, despite Dracula's new human characteristics, both Coppola and Haddon kept quite much of his original features. Haddon's peculiar choice to turn Dracula into a modern entrepreneur may be also a sign of his personal views and taste in science-fiction, a sign of the modern production of the adaptation. Whereas the TV show *Dracula* was produced to be consumed from a different audience in a different medium, thus it required a longer plot to be developed through the episodes and seasons.

As for the other way around, as this analysis was very specific and focused on only one specificity of the entire novel, the Count's depiction, little can be said on how the adaptations may have changed the readers' views of the novel. Stoker's Dracula is way more violent and cold and little is said about his human life. But once a reader connects Dracula's line on page 294, in which he says he too is able to love, to the history background set for him on the adaptations, one can look differently to Stoker's Count. While reading, one can expect or assume that Dracula had a sad or tragic love story during his human life, even if there is no mention about a deceased wife or about Mina being her reincarnation. Also, once it is said that Dracula regains a younger appearance throughout the book, one can picture him as a better-looking figure.

As Bruhn says:

Producing meaning in literature relies to a great extent on the symbolic sign function, whereas film can produce a much broader range of signs, bringing together symbolic, iconic and indexical sign relating in complicated ways to film's use of sound, music and verbal speech and written words, moving images, and cinema's active engagement with the senses.¹⁹

Henceforth, small aspects like the music playing while Dracula is speaking, the actor's body expressions, or his speech may influence a viewer to look differently to the novel's character. "Going back and forth in a continuous reading of the novel in light of the film and the film as interpreted by the novel can lead to fruitful insights,"²⁰ thus, as Bruhn suggests, the process of adapting Dracula, as with other novels, should be faced as a two-way process in which adaptations cannot be strictly loyal to the original work. Ultimately, the book will change the readers' views on the adaptations, and the adaptations will change the spectators' views on the book in both subtle and evident ways.

¹⁹ BRUHN. *Dialogizing Adaptation Studies: From One-Way Transport to a Dialogic Two-Way Process*, p. 12.

²⁰ BRUHN. *Dialogizing Adaptation Studies: From One-Way Transport to a Dialogic Two-Way Process*, p. 15.

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