

Compare And Contrast Essay Example on Movies

Essay Topic:

The similarities and differences of Bram Stroker's "Dracula" and Francis Ford Coppola's movie based on the book.

Essay Questions:

Why is the image of Dracula so attractive to people all over the globe? How is Count Dracula originally portrayed in Bram Stroker's "Dracula"? What "innovations" does Francis Ford Coppola while producing Bram Stoker's Dracula in 1992?

Thesis Statement:

The book's main evil character Count Dracula has been a prototype of the devil for a very long time, especially on the TV screen.

Dracula in Stroker's book and in Coppola's movie essay

Introduction: People all over the world know legends and myths that they hand over to each of the following generations. These myths are always very exciting and usually work for making the history of a certain country mysterious and more tempting. Some of this "stories" are very "realistic" due to their relevance to events that really took place and are historically marked. One of these universal semi myths that is known in every single country and has received a continuation in various forms of art. This is more of a real-life-legend that has touched the hearts of many people, sowing horror and fear in their souls through the assumption of its possibility. Bram Stroker's "Dracula" is literally the point of concentration of all these fears and an outstanding reflection of the author's perception of the world. There is hardly a person that does not know this name or does not at least associate it with vampires. The book's main evil character Count Dracula has been a prototype of the devil for a very long time, especially on the TV screen. His image is so very well drawn by Bram Stroker in his book "Dracula" written in 1897 that there is no surprise in its popularity among movie and stage directors. The book itself is an outstanding work able to inspire many talented people to put it to life again and again. So many

attempts have been made so far that it is very surprising that the “Dracula” theme can still be called actual, taking into count even the latest productions on this topic like “Van Helsing”. As the book can be honestly called a masterpiece the evaluation of the screen productions may be as critical as never.

These are some of the popular movies based on the Dracula theme: “Dracula” (1931), “Dracula” (1979), “Nosferatu: Phantom der Nacht” (1979), “Bram Stroker’s Dracula” (1992), “Dracula 2000” (2002), “Dracula: Pages from a virgin’s diary” (2002), “Van Helsing” (2004) and others. Nevertheless, an outstanding work of Francis Ford Coppola in 1992 makes a difference and impresses the viewer with the best Stroker’s Dracula filming ever and even more than that – provides not a deeper but analysis different from what Stroker did. There always will be certain moments that may be considered negative while comparing a movie and a book, but this is very subjective. Therefore it is possible to make the best pick among the movies but it does not necessarily mean that it will be the best reflection of the book in the subjective opinion of every single viewer.

Among numerous productions there are only several pictures worth of the reader’s attention. As the book itself does not completely analyze the psychological motive of the conduct of the characters, the productions that could not add anything to the plot were doomed from the very start. The Romanian semi myth attracted a large number of directors who wanted to change something in the book.

“Nosferatu” filmed by F.W. Murnau in 1922 is one of the works to mention due to its high professionalism and profound understanding of the hidden context of Bram Stroker’s “Dracula”. This screening is a myth and mystery oriented version on the book, which has nothing to do with reality. Dracula, Count Orlock (Max Shreck) is depicted as a demonical creature with pointy ears and long fingernails. The only psychological message in this version is the realization that Count Orlock being so strong and unconquerable is not able to resist a woman (here Ellen), which is depicted as a better way in the movie than she is in the book. Another negative moment is the disappearance of Van Helsing from the script. This character is very vivid and significant in the description of the side opposing Dracula, therefore the absence of his positive and negative qualities make the movie lose in general. Van Helsing is also a representative of the society back then and without him the image of the society is not quite full. The image of the Ellen’s fiancé Thomas with all his amenability still remains helpless and worth of pity. Count Orlock’s constant lust for blood terrifies and in connection with his appearance makes him very sufficiently frightening for the image of Dracula. Nevertheless “the blood-sucking label” remains the basic characteristic of Dracula in the movie, making him only a monster and limiting the perception of the whole story. Murnau automatically deprives

Dracula from possessing human emotions and feelings just for being so much different from ordinary person's appearance. Though Dracula does not stay completely without any qualities peculiar to human beings but this elimination brings a sort of disharmony into the film's message.

Originally, Stroker's "Dracula" is a tale of love. It is a story of love, where love is high above the mortality and death. At the same time it is a novel about the struggle of treachery and sacrifice in the name of love. Count Dracula is ready to do anything to return the love he lost, any remedy is normal for him. The reader observes him as a personification of a complete and absolute "evil". Count Dracula is guided by the power of love, which is considered to be a "supreme" virtue. He is lead by the intention to love, originally, a good intention, but he is ready to destroy anything with his army of vampires on his way.

Stroker described more than a story of horror, but a story about good and evil, love and hate. Stroker reveals the world as a strong intercoupling of the evil and the good and their constant fight against each other. He writes a story about a "creature-person" that is full of pain and loneliness and the impossibility to change the way it lives. It becomes a story of an "ever bleeding soul". This understanding is very close to the very essence of the book, but still contains subjective opinions.

Francis Ford Coppola made a magnificent job in producing Bram Stoker's Dracula in 1992. His talent and his special world perception made did not only distort the book, but it is absolutely necessary to say that it complemented the book wonderfully. Coppola's contribution to the psychological and motivational analysis of the book characters and events is tremendous. Owing to this film the book stops just being the "plot of a terrifying legendary tale". He also made a dash through adjusting the book to the historical evens as much as it is possible, making the story even more terrific! He observes a great historical trace from the real historical Vlad Teppis to Count Dracula making the image of the character very deep and intense. Coppola destroys the vampire stereotype by showing Count Dracula (acted out by Gary Oldman) as an "enchanting" and able to love person and not just an eager-for-blood creature. Though Stroker's book was already a mix of facts and figment it seems to lack depth which is observed in Coppola's filming. Coppola's Dracula emphasizes the controversy of the evil-good relations. It is the transformation of a horror myth into a story of love, passion and death, delivering the message that is not that observable in Stroker's book: true love lives forever.

Bram Stroker simply depicts a terrible "creature" Count Dracula acting evil and Coppola shows the viewer that even truly evil people can love. At the same time Bram Stroker's world in "Dracula" is not such a complete disorder and failure of principles as Coppola's Dracula-world. Stroker seems to be

more optimistic in reliance to the side opposing Dracula. Coppola's world is a chaos generating another chaos. "Dracula" also represents a tragedy of a person who betrays because he was once betrayed and wants to revenge. The basic negative aspect of this version of "Dracula" in comparison to the book is the absence of the prehistory of Dracula's tragedy and his disillusionment in everything surrounding him, which would have made the film "weightier". A positive aspect that made the film save the atmosphere in the book is the presence of the character's journals through which Stroker revealed the personalities in the book. Coppola's perception of Mina and Count Dracula's relations is full of tenderness and eternity. Perhaps, there is no need to chase the best filming because filming is always a more concrete expression of someone's perception of anything. A book, on the other hand is more open to variations, especially dealing with the messages of the book, therefore the diversity of opinions is a standard phenomenon.

Conclusion: A book and a film are two different universes very hard to compare. As the main characteristic of art is subjectivism it is impossible to say what filming is the best. Nevertheless, as it has been already mentioned it is possible to pick a criterion of evaluation in order to make the best choice. In "Dracula's" analysis the main criterion is the message revealed through the movie. In this case Francis Ford Coppola's work remains the best one in various directions. In addition to everything it raises the curtain of the sexuality of the nineteenth century. Coppola's perception of Stroker's dualism impresses a lot. The book and the movie do not completely match, but in comparison to the global meaning of the film this can be certainly "forgiven". Both of them have their advantages and disadvantages, preferable on an individual basis.

The comparison and contradiction of these two features is hard, but nevertheless possible to do. It is definitely a book and a movie worth of watching and making personal conclusions about a Dracula living in each one of us, waiting to wake up.

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